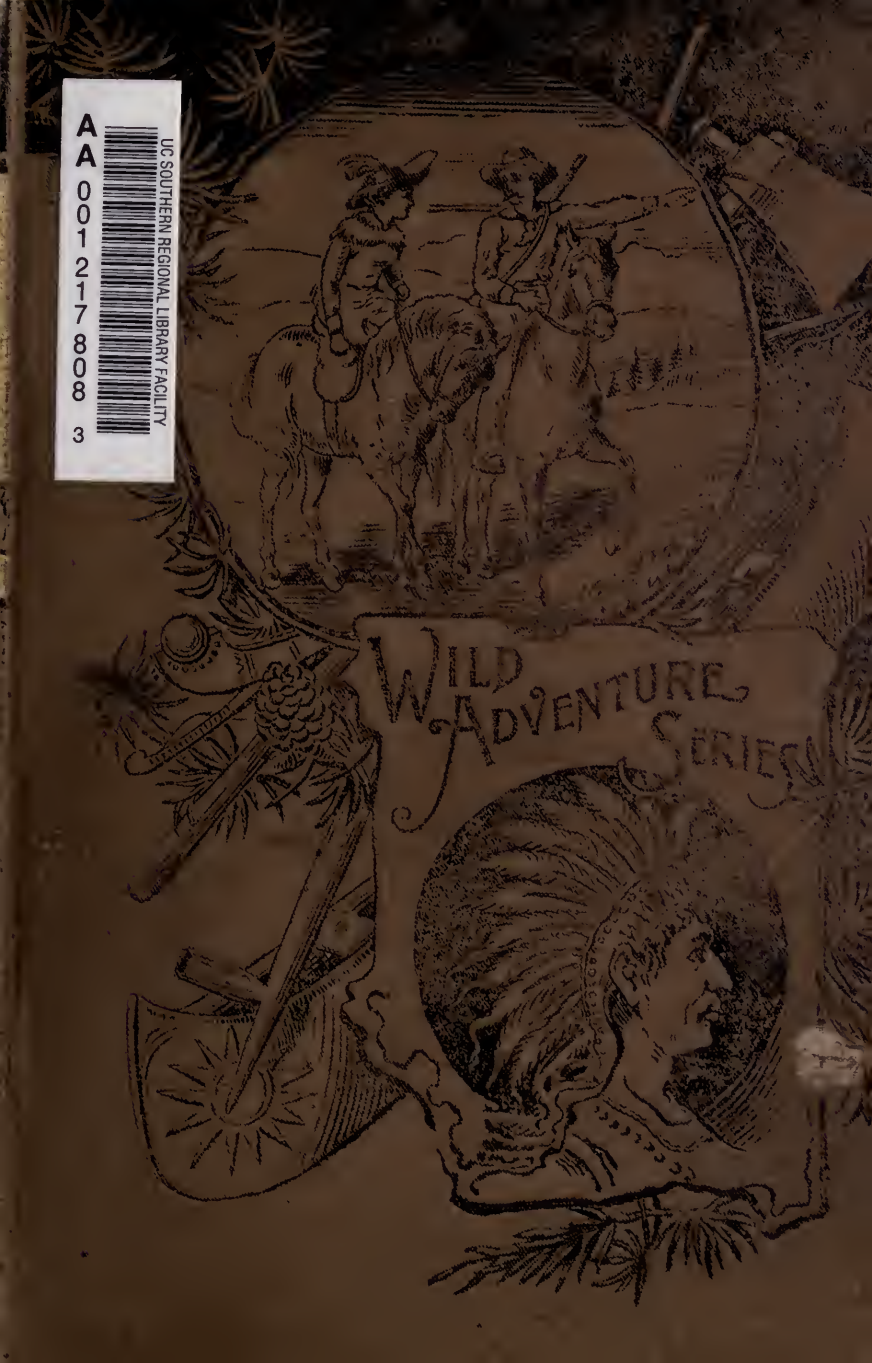

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BUCK RIDER DROPPED THE DIAMONDS INTO THE HIDING PLACE HE HAD CHOSEN.

THE

MYSTERY OF A DIAMOND

BY

FRANK H. CONVERSE

Author of "A Voyage to the Gold Coast," "Van," Etc., Etc.

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THE MYSTERY OF A DIAMOND.

CHAPTER I.

AN ARRIVAL IN BURTON.

"Now, what under the canopy is *that?*" ejaculated Squire Dobbs, staring at a "new fangled road machine," as he mentally termed it, the like of which had never before been seen in Burton. The good man stood watching it as it spun along the dusty road, the motive power, as he soon discovered, being a young man perched on a diminutive saddle high above a large, rapidly revolving wheel, which was closely pursued, yet never overtaken, by a smaller one, the spokes of each glistening like silver in the rays of the sun.

"I dunno what they'll be getting up next, M'ria," he remarked, with a dubious shake of his head; "for, what with 'lectric telephones an' sich, there don't seem much left to invent."

"Likely enough 'lectricity has somethin' to do with that machine," suggested his wondering wife; and meekly acquiescing, Mr. Dobbs, who contained within himself the varied offices of Justice of the Peace, Town Clerk, Insurance Agent and member of the School Board, took his departure for his little office down town.

The bicyclist, who was a well built young man, about twenty years old, with pleasant gray eyes, reg-

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ular features and a slight mustache, sprang from the saddle on arriving at the main street of the village, and, holding the guiding bar in one hand, consulted his watch.

"Forty two miles since seven o'clock this morning isn't so very bad," he remarked, approvingly; and, replacing the timepiece, he stood regarding the prospect before him with a sense of thorough enjoyment and admiration.

For Burton—not infrequently mentioned by summer tourists as "Burton-by-the-sea"—is one of the most picturesque towns on the New England sea board. Before it, gemmed with islands and dotted with sails, lies the wide spread Atlantic, whose waves break on a curving beach of hard, white sand at its very feet. Behind the rather straggling collection of old time houses, with here and there one of more modern build, rise ranges of pine and spruce covered hills.

"Now to see what Burton can furnish in the way of lunch," said the young man gayly, as he approached the Burton Hotel.

Unheeding the stare of a dozen or more idlers scattered about the greensward which inclined gently to the street, the stranger leaned his bicycle carefully against the side of the piazza steps and entered the house.

While lunch was being prepared, the young man seated himself by the window and drew a letter from his pocket. Its contents were as follows:

To MR EDWARD MORRIS SIR

your favor At hand the burton comity of which I am honnorary chairman and Secretary by younanimous vote Apoint 1 o'clock tuesday p m May 10 at the offis of Josiar dobbs esq one of Said bord the time And plase where you Will present yoreself to be egsamined As per yore Aplication for the Techership of burton town scoul Now at Present without any Techer

per Order captain Prescott Bluster Sec'y."

"It is curious," mused Mr. Edward Morris, replacing the letter in his pocket and tilting his chair against the wall, "that this whim of mine should bring me into contact with the very man father spoke so bitterly against when he was telling about Uncle Peter's last sea voyage the other evening—nice sort of person to put on school committee this Captain Bluster must be both morally and intellectually, if his——"

"Lunch is ready, sir," announced Mrs. Merrill, the landlady, looking into the room. While Mr. Morris, with an excellent appetite, is discussing cold chicken and bread and butter, washed down with a goblet or two of rich milk, let us glance outside, where an interested and inquisitive group have surrounded his bicycle.

"It's a kind of v'locipede, I reck'n," observed one of the loungers.

"It's an improvement on velocipedes—it's a bicycle," explained Roy Cole, a manly looking young fellow of sixteen or thereabouts, dressed rather more carefully than the others. "I saw lots of them in Boston last summer," he added, with an affectation of carelessness, as though bicycles were anything but a novelty.

"I expect it takes considerable science to run one of 'em," said Tim Owen, with a wise look on his freckled face.

"Pooh!" responded Roy, who was just at that age when the average boy thinks he knows nearly as much as the encyclopedia, "it's easy enough—any fool can ride a bicycle."

"Jump on then, Cole—quick!" called a common looking, thick set fellow, a couple of years older and half a head taller than Roy. The suggestive advice was followed by a laugh at Roy's expense, for the speaker, Buckingham Wellington Rider, whose high

sounding name had been localized to "Buck" Rider, was a sort of town bully whom no one cared to offend. A mutual dislike had always existed between Rider and Roy. At the sound of the other's sneering voice, Roy turned quickly toward him, and made a hot retort.

At the boy's sharp answer Buck Rider colored furiously.

"Just let me get at him," he exclaimed, but as he started forward, Con Badger, his ally, seized him by the arm.

"Let him be; there's old Kasner coming," he said, in an undertone, as a stolid looking German, six feet high and broad in proportion, came walking slowly toward them. Mr. Wilhelm Kasner was the Burton constable, and being a man of almost incredible strength, was a terror to evil doers when roused, though ordinarily he was one of the best natured men in existence.

Unmindful of the sharp words between the two young fellows, Mr. Kasner took his pipe from his mouth, and stared with unmitigated astonishment at the bicycle which Roy stood holding in the attitude of a bicyclist preparing to mount.

"Hah!" exclaimed the worthy German, "I dinks I knows him now—dot is von icicle. I reads about him in ter *Illustrirte Zeitung*. Shpose you can rides him, eh, Roy?"

With the constable Roy was rather a favorite, as, indeed, he was with the Burton people in general.

Before Roy could reluctantly reply in the negative, Buck Rider's voice was heard again.

"He ride! He with all them good clo'es on! Why, he couldn't ride a——"

"Rail outer town, but they say you can do it in good shape, Buck," interposed another voice.

A smothered titter followed this interruption, for

at the country fair held at North Burton the week previous, young Mr. Rider, who had been taken red handed in the act of driving a farmer's wagon off the grounds, was mounted on a painfully sharp rail, with his hands tied behind him by a number of the assembled grangers, and, preceded by a drum and fife playing the "Rogue's March," was escorted beyond the town limits with a strong intimation that if caught anywhere in the vicinity during the fair week, he would not get off so easily as this.

Particularly was this retort appreciated by Mr. Kasner, who had been heard to say that "sooner ash lader he vos surely put the stheel pracelet on dot young Rider's wrisht."

"Hor! hor! hor!" roared the constable, whose broad sides shook with laughter, "dot vos a good shot—I only hear about Buck's ride lasht night—dey say he hang on well. Hor! hor! hor!"

"What ails *you*, old Limburger cheese?" growled Buck in an audible undertone, which Kasner's quick ear instantly caught.

"Eh? Vot vos it you says, mine young frent? Old Limpurger cheese, vos it?" And Kasner, who was rather sensitive to any and all reflections on his nationality, made a sudden stride in the direction of Rider and his friend, who took to their heels, greatly to the diversion of the bystanders.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth," laughed Charley Clary. "Come, now, Roy," continued the speaker, addressing his friend, for the two were great cronies, "you say it's easy enough to ride a bicycle; jump on and take a little spin; the young fellow inside there won't be through dinner this ever so long, and even if he does come out, he won't care, I know."

"Yes, go ahead, Cole!" "Go on, Roy!" echoed half a dozen voices.

Now, among Roy's many faults was that of a certain impulsiveness of action prompting him to do things without stopping to think of the possible consequences. It was more than simple heedlessness, and perhaps the sharp experiences through which he afterwards passed were just what were needed to open his eyes to this particular failing.

"All right," said reckless Roy, "hold her steady, boys, till I get fairly on," and while a couple of the onlookers did as directed, Roy swung himself to the saddle. Just as the bicycle started, the basket phaeton and pony span of the wealthy Mrs. Stanhope, of New York (one of the earlier summer visitants), turned the corner of the Burton Hotel.

Her stepson, Augustus, a foppishly attired young fellow of fifteen, was driving, while by his side sat Mrs. Stanhope, dressed in the height of fashion. The black lace *fichu* at her throat was confined by a magnificent diamond cross, which it was her habitual custom to wear at all times and seasons.

Roy, in his confusion, gave a wrong turn to the guiding bar, and the bicycle dashed directly toward the phaeton!

The spectators shouted, and Mrs. Stanhope, uttering a scream of alarm, snatched the reins from the hands of her flurried stepson. While she pulled back with all her strength, Augustus tried to urge them forward with the whip.

The spirited ponies pranced and snorted, and WHACK came the bicycle wheel against the carriage body. Roy took a "header" fairly over the phaeton, into Deacon Sampson's recently planted cucumber patch, while the machine, promptly rebounding from the blow, fell over on its side.

As Roy scrambled to his feet, considerably jarred, though not much hurt, he saw, to his unutterable horror, that the ponies, frightened by the bicycle,

had broken into a run, and were tearing up the road, followed by a noisy concourse of men and boys, shouting with all the strength of healthy lungs.

"Well, young man, you *have* done it," said some one, rather sharply, and, turning, Roy saw the owner of the bicycle picking up his property, and evidently vexed.

"I am afraid I *have* done it," returned Roy, distressedly, "and, oh! if anything does happen to the lady or young Mr. Stanhope, I shall never forgive myself."

"Think of that the next time that you're tempted into mischief," said Mr. Morris, gravely.

Charley Clary came tearing back.

"It's all—right—some one—stopped—the team!" he shouted, long before he arrived at the spot.

On receipt of this reassuring intelligence, Roy proceeded to wash his face at the wayside pump, and the stranger to finish the dusting of the machine, eying the two boys meanwhile with a close scrutiny. Suddenly he turned to Roy, and said:

"I think I heard some one call you Roy Cole, and you," turning to Charley, "I expect, are young Clary. A friend of mine who undertook to teach school here last winter, mentioned you both to me very kindly, after he knew that I had made up my mind to try it."

"Oh, yes, it was Mr. Greyson," cried Charley.

"We liked him *so* much," added Roy, "and the day that he had the trouble with that beast of a Buck Rider, with Cy Dobbs backing him up——"

Roy stopped abruptly, as a swift touch from his friend admonished him to drop the subject. For as Roy mentioned the two names, the young man's face grew stern and grave, while there was a look in his eye not pleasant to see.

"Did you say that you were going to take the school, sir?" respectfully asked Charley.

"If I pass my examination I shall," was the quiet answer. "Good day, boys." And, with a friendly nod to both, Mr Morris turned away in the direction of Mr. Dobbs's office, which the boys had pointed out to him, trundling the machine before him.

Roy and his companion started off up the road, to learn further particulars as to the runaway.

The Burton school had the reputation of being the hardest to teach of any in Harvey County. The boys were mostly lumbering or fishing eight months in the year, and were a hard lot, usually contriving to make their teacher's life a burden during the school term.

In spite of all this, Mr. Morris was going to submit to an examination for the teachership.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. STANHOPE'S DIAMOND CROSS.

THE experience recounted by his college class mate, George Greyson, was fresh in Morris's mind, as he reached Mr. Dobbs's office.

Mr. Morris entered the room where the Burton school committee were awaiting him, and he was formally introduced by Squire Dobbs to his colleagues—Dr. Osborne, the village physician, and also to Captain Prescott Bluster, a tall, broad shouldered man, with dull, greenish hued eyes, a chronic scowl, and a hook nose.

The formal examination was easily passed by Mr. Morris, and he received his certificate and the school house key.

Then Captain Bluster cleared his throat.

"Hem, Mr.—er—Morris," said he, "I presume that the bicycle I saw accompanying of you, is yours."

"It is," was the brief answer.

"The extravagance of young folks nowadays," oratorically remarked Captain Bluster, "is somethin' preponderous. Why, when *I* was a young man, if I'd have put out three or four months' pay on such jimcracks as bicycles and the like, I wouldn't have been settin' here today with fifty thousand dollars to my credit in Blackstone bank, and nigh as much more in navigation—no, sir!"

As Mr. Morris did not appear to be impressed by

this statement, Captain Bluster deemed it expedient to take him down a peg.

"Of course your college course com—prehended the science of navigation, Mr. Morris," he said.

"It did not, but I have studied it for my own gratification," was the reply, disconcerting to the questioner, who had expected a negative answer.

"Well, sir," began the captain, impressively, after a moment's thought, "if you had a scholar in navigation, how would you begin in showing of him about takin' a lunar observation and workin' it through?"

"I shouldn't begin at all—you know, or should, by this time, if you don't, that navigation is not considered one of the branches of common school teaching."

At this very unexpected answer, a ripple of surprise passed over the assembly.

"Sir!" shouted Captain Bluster, wrathfully, "how *dare* you—a common school master, address one of the selec' men of Burton in such an imperdent manner? Do you know who I am, sir?" rising fiercely from his chair in a white heat of anger.

"Why, yes," returned Mr. Morris, eying the infuriated captain, "at least I know of you by reputation as the man who once commanded the ship Auriferous, and used to have old sailors seized up in the rigging by their thumbs for complaining of their spoiled provisions. I've *heard* of far worse things that are laid to your charge," continued Morris, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously, "but it's hardly worth while going into particulars just at present."

Captain Bluster's florid face changed to such a lively purple at this remarkable answer, that Doctor Osborne involuntarily thrust his fingers into his vest pocket in search of his lancet case.

"One more home truth like that would have thrown him into an apoplectic fit, Mr. Morris," cheerfully remarked the doctor, as Captain Bluster rushed out of the office.

"I could have told him quite a number, doctor," replied Morris, significantly, "for an uncle of mine who was a ship master knew his record very well, and——"

At this point the young man suddenly checked himself as though fearing that he should say too much, and looking at his watch said he must be going.

"One moment, Mr. Morris," said Mr. Dobbs, affably, regarding the new teacher over his spectacles, while Dr. Osborne began looking helplessly about the room for his hat, which but a moment before he had placed on his own head.

"I suppose," continued Squire Dobbs, "that you—hem—may have heard that ours is called a—a—rather hard school to keep."

"I was told as much by Mr. Greyson, a college classmate and intimate friend of mine, who, in trying to preserve proper discipline in your school, was knocked down, beaten and kicked in the side, from the effects of which he will probably never recover," replied Morris, involuntarily clinching his small but sinewy hands as he spoke.

"That infernal Buck Rider—he'll be hung before he's a year older," parenthesized the doctor, with considerable energy, as he looked abstractedly under the table for his missing head piece.

"I don't know whether that Rider fellow will show his face in the schoolroom this spring or not," continued the doctor, "but if he does, and I were in your place, Mr. Morris, I'd—a—just double up your arm—so," and without making any reply the young man obeyed.

"Um," commented the physician, compressing the swelling muscles between his elbow and shoulder, "that feels something like—anything of a gymnast, eh?"

"While I was pulling stroke with the Howards last year, I used to put up a hundred pound dumb bell easier than any man in the class," replied Morris.

"Perhaps," continued the doctor, as he glanced at the young man's erect, well knit frame, "you can spar—a little."

"Well, yes, doctor," returned Mr. Morris, with an intuitive perception of his questioner's drift. "At least, the gymnasium boys think that for an amateur, I put on the gloves in very fine shape."

"Ha!" ejaculated Dr. Osborne, with a slight chuckle. "You'll do." With which enigmatical remark, he shot through the door, leaving Mr. Dobbs wondering what connection there could be between dumb bells, or knowing how to put on gloves, and successful school teaching.

Giving it up as an unanswerable conundrum, he gave Mr. Morris full directions for finding the house of Miss Cynthia Cole, where the "school master" usually boarded during his brief stop in Burton.

Mr. Morris, having taken his leave, and his bicycle, made his way back to the Burton Hotel, where he left directions for the forwarding of his trunk, on its arrival, to the Cole homestead.

Meanwhile, let me go back to the runaway team, which, as I told you, was stopped in its headlong flight down the village street.

Mrs. Stanhope, without waiting to be assisted, sprang out, saw a boy or man, she could hardly say which, standing at the head of the panting horses, and, quite exhausted with her terror and excitement, sank down on the edge of the well curb in Mr. Dobbs's door yard, close to the road.

Good Mrs. Dobbs ran out, bare headed, with a glass of water, which Mrs. Stanhope eagerly accepted.

"I am better now, thank you," she said, sitting upright, and looking about her, "so that—why, Augustus Stanhope, what a looking object you are!"

Her stepson had just come up. His face was muddy, he was hatless, and had lost a shoe in the duck pond, while from his well plastered hair, his abbreviated coat, and the very tips of his driving gloves, great drops of discolored ditch water were falling.

"I want to go home," said Augustus, in a hollow voice.

"Well, go home!" sharply returned his stepmother; "and you'll have to walk, too. I can't have the lining and cushions of my new phaeton ruined by you in that state."

With a very ill grace, Augustus turned away, amidst some suppressed giggling from the assembled villagers, and started in the direction of the Widow Smith's, where, by the advice of the family physician, Mrs. Stanhope had taken rooms for herself and stepson during the spring and summer, to recruit after the past winter's excitement and fashionable dissipations of the city.

"If you want to keep your good looks, Mrs. Stanhope," blunt spoken old Dr. Boles had said, "you must give the crowded watering places the go by this year. Why don't you run down to Burton-by-the-sea, and try a few weeks of quiet? Society needn't know but that you're at Newport or Long Branch—and think what a saving of money it would be," he added with a full knowledge of the weak spot in Mrs. Stanhope's armor.

The last argument had carried the day; for one of the leading traits of the wealthy lady's disposition was a niggardliness, especially in small things, which she carried to the very furthest extent.

Mrs. Stanhope had been the widow of a diamond broker in a very small way, who died in the second year of their marriage, leaving her all his property.

In due time, she married Mr. Stanhope, the wealthy banker, who was a widower with one son, Augustus, of whom she grew to be indulgently fond.

Mrs. Stanhope lived for excitement and social display, and, as her husband was lavish with his money, she was able to join in the fashionable life without encroaching upon her private fortune.

Now among her other weaknesses was a fondness for creating a sensation, even if in a small way, and after the departure of Augustus, Mrs. Stanhope rose to her feet with a gracious smile.

"Where is the hero who imperiled his life to stop my runaway horses?" she asked.

"Right here, mum," said a loud voice; and Buck Rider, with Con Badger at his heels, pushed himself forward with unusual alacrity, just as Roy and his friend reached the spot.

"Goodness, Charley," whispered Roy, "it isn't possible that *he* had backbone enough to stop those horses."

"Sh—h—the lady is speaking," replied Charley, in an undertone.

"Will you tell me your name, young man?" said Mrs. Stanhope, graciously, as the "hero," whose face and hands would have been much improved by a liberal use of soap and water, stood before her.

"Buckin'ham Wellin'ton Rider, mum," replied Buck, whose small eyes greedily followed every movement of Mrs. Stanhope's hand, which seemed to be seeking her pocket among the folds of her dress.

"Buckingham Wellington," said Mrs. Stanhope, impressively, "I can discern in your features the marked evidences of the courage you have just displayed, and upon your brow the seal of truthfulness

and honesty which——" Here some one among the bystanders uttered an "Ahem!" of such proportions as to produce a giggle from a few of the bolder spirits and bring Mrs. Stanhope to a pause. But quickly recovering herself, the lady continued:

"Truthfulness and honesty which are unmistakable."

"Thank'ee, mum," answered Buck, thrusting his tongue into the back of his cheek and slightly contorting his left eye for the benefit of Con Badger, who stood a little in the background. Mrs. Stanhope, inwardly gratified at the eager interest displayed by the bystanders, continued:

"I do not mean to wound your native pride by offering you money for your invaluable——"

"You needn't be afraid of woundin' his pride, mum," interposed Con Badger, pressing to the side of his chosen associate, whose face had lengthened amazingly at Mrs. Stanhope's avowal, "for Buckingham and me both is too poor to be proud."

"Very well," blandly replied Mrs. Stanhope, though a shadowy look of vexation passed over her features. She drew a handsome purse from her pocket, extracted a crisp new greenback and extended it graciously to Buckingham, who, thrusting it into his vest pocket, gave a duck of the head that was intended as a bow of acknowledgment.

"And now, Buckingham," said the banker's wife, with a smile of condescension, "my horses seem quiet enough now, and as you can, no doubt, easily manage them, I shall have to ask you to drive me to the Widow Smith's—my boarding place."

Buckingham hesitated, but perhaps thinking that he might possibly be the gainer in the end, he accompanied Mrs. Stanhope to the phaeton, and helped her in with a clumsy gallantry which afforded inexpressible delight to the onlookers.

He then proceeded to draw up the handsome lap robe, and tuck it in about the lady with such an excess of zeal that he paid no attention to Roy Cole, who was waiting on the opposite side of the phaeton for a chance to apologize for giving her such a fright.

But what was it that, glittering and sparkling like a cluster of dewdrops in the morning sun, lay in the thick lamb's wool mat in the bottom of the phaeton? Buck Rider knew the moment he caught a glimpse of it. A greedy light shone in his small eyes, and as he adjusted the lap robe about the lady's feet, his fingers closed around the coveted and half hidden prize. In another moment it was slyly transferred to his pocket.

"There, that will do, Wellington," said Mrs. Stanhope, rather impatiently, and Rider, lifting his eyes, met the steady gaze of Roy Cole, who had forgotten his own immediate business with the wealthy banker's wife in watching Buck Rider's peculiar movements; for he, too, had seen the flash of the gems for an instant, but it had all passed so suddenly that he hardly knew what to do or say.

His lips were parted to speak to Mrs. Stanhope, when Buck Rider growled in a surly voice:

"Well—wot are *you* starin' at—do you want anything of me?" But before Roy could open his mouth, a sharp cry from Mrs. Stanhope, who was drawing the folds of her camel's hair shawl about her shoulders, checked his utterance.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, in a voice of alarm, as she felt the lace at her throat, "my diamond cross, that cost six thousand dollars, is gone; what shall I do—what shall I do?"

CHAPTER III.

MR. KASNER AND HIS PRISONER.

As the news of Mrs. Stanhope's loss spread rapidly from mouth to mouth, Roy hesitated whether to speak or not. He could almost have sworn that he saw a glitter of something like diamonds for the briefest part of a second in the fleece of the mat, yet a glance showed him that it was not there. Should he speak out and accuse Buck Rider of having concealed it, which Roy now began to believe, or wait a little?

"Where did you have it, mum—in yer pocket?" asked Rider, with an affectation of great simplicity, as he began searching in the bottom of the phaeton, turning up the mat and pulling over the lap robe with an extravagant show of energy.

"The cross was in the lace at my neck when the horses first took fright; I am positive of that," cried Mrs. Stanhope, half hysterically; "so it must have——"

"Dropped inter the road, or worked loose when you jumped out, mum," eagerly interrupted Buck Rider; "for I've looked ev'rywheres about the kerrige, and it isn't there for cert'in."

"It might have fallen from the lady's scarf on to the lap robe and slipped down into that rug at her feet," suggested Roy, speaking for the first time, and looking steadily into Rider's shifty eyes.

"Oh, yes," was the sneering reply, "when I've

shook and pawed 'em both over as you see me do—there's a good many *mights* in this world. For the matter of that," he added, in a louder tone, for the benefit of any who were listening, "it might be in your pocket; you ain't be'n hangin' and spyin' round here all this time for nothin'."

The hot blood rushed into Roy's face as Mrs. Stanhope, who seemed for the moment to be quite bewildered by the magnitude of her sudden loss, looked sharply at him.

"It's a sight more likely to be in *yours*," he answered, angrily, and he was on the point of directly charging Buck with the theft without thinking whether he could prove it or not, when Mrs. Stanhope spoke again, just as Mr. Kasner came slowly up, with his pipe in his mouth.

"I will give a—handsome reward to any one who will find and return my cross, sir," said Mrs. Stanhope, who knew him by sight as the village constable.

The phlegmatic official stood looking about him with his hands in his pockets, quietly observant of what was going on, despite his seeming dullness.

"Dot vos right, madam," returned Mr. Kasner, with provoking calmness. But knowing something by general report of her penurious ways, he thought within himself that between Mrs. Stanhope's ideas of "a handsome reward," and the ideas of other people, there was likely to be a wide margin.

"Well," finally remarked the unfortunate lady, with a long sigh, "I suppose I can do no good by staying here any longer. Buckingham!"

"Mum," responded Rider, who was standing a little apart, talking in an earnest undertone to Con Badger, who, by the lowering expression on his face, and negative shake of the head, seemed not to agree with what the other was saying. . . .

"You may drive me over to Mrs. Smith's now," said Mrs. Stanhope, with a final glance at the little groups of searchers scattered along the road—"Mrs. Jared Smith's—the last house but one——"

"I'm powerful sorry, mum," interposed Buck, in a tone of intense melancholy, "and I'd orter told you before, only I clean forgot it, but the fac' is, mum, I'm just up from a five weeks' spell of typhoid fever, and you know that's dretful ketchin'; I wouldn't a' touched that there lap robe of your'n for no money if I'd only thought," he added, parentheticall-ly, as Mrs. Stanhope uttered a little exclamation of dismay. "I'm sorry I hadn't spoke about it before."

"Never mind, Buckingham," replied poor Mrs. Stanhope, "I never cared very much for the Afghan —the colors do not suit my complexion. If it will be of any service to you, Buckingham, you may have it for your thoughtfulness in telling me of the danger of infection," and she pushed it out of the phaeton with her foot.

"Very well, mum," rejoined the ingenious young man, "I'm willin' to resk havin' a relapse rather than *you* should ketch anything of the kind, for typhoid fevers is terrible things to spile one's good looks, as you can see by *my* face, mum."

Mr. Morris, who, *en route* for his boarding place, had just arrived on the scene of action, here stepped to the side of the phaeton.

"Can I be of service to you, madam?" he respect-fully asked, lifting his hat, and at the same present-ing his card.

"Thanks, Mr.—Morris," returned the lady, with a look of relief, as she glanced at the card, "if you *would* drive me to my boarding place. Mr. Kasner," she added, addressing the constable, "please inform these people that I will give a *handsome* reward to the finder. Now, Mr. Morris, if you please."

Delegating to young Clary the duty of conveying his bicycle to the Cole homestead, Mr. Morris drove off with the lady.

Mr. Kasner, looking after the receding phaeton, put up his pipe and walked leisurely toward Roy.

"I hopes she may finds dot cross," he meditatively remarked, seemingly addressing himself rather than Roy, "but I doubts it mooch—there vos some dings 'bout dese bisness I does not ondershtan'—"

"Don't seem to be looking at or listening to me, Mr. Kasner," said Roy, in an undertone, without lifting his eyes, "but walk back this way pretty soon—there's something private I want to tell you, and just now somebody is watching."

Wearing the gayly striped Afghan after the manner of an Indian blanket, Buck Rider was parading to and fro along the road, to the delight of an admiring crowd of small boys, though Roy noticed that Buck was slyly eying *him*—in fact appeared to be playing the spy upon him.

Mr. Kasner, who was far more quick witted than people gave him credit for, pricked up his ears. He turned away, and after poking about in the little bunches of grass by the roadside and among the dust in the wheel ruts, he came leisurely back, looking with seeming earnestness on either side of the road as he walked back.

"I am almost *sure* that Buck Rider picked that cross up from the rug in the bottom of the phaeton, and that it is in one of his pockets, Mr. Kasner," said Roy, in a low, rapid voice, still keeping his eyes directed toward the ground, and hardly suffering the motion of his lips to be seen. The constable, without appearing to notice him, passed leisurely by, but his light blue eyes expanded a little, and his lips parted for a long whistle, which, however, did not escape them. He made no further sign of having

heard, but, with his hands in his pockets, and his head still bent downward, he edged along to the place where Badger and Rider were standing—the latter exchanging considerable rough *badinage* with the bolder of the boys about him.

"Well, Con," finally observed facetious young Mr. Rider, with affected carelessness, as, taking the Afghan from his shoulders he proceeded to fold it with great deliberation, "it's no good for you 'n' I to be wastin' our vallyble time foolin' with these youngsters huntin' for Mis' Stanhope's dimuns, which it's like lookin for a needle in a haystack to think of findin' —come on, let's us be goin'."

"Wait one little minute," said Kasner, suddenly stepping forward. With the remark the worthy constable laid a huge hand on Rider's shoulder. The movement at once excited the attention of every one within hearing. In anticipation of a scene, they began to crowd about the two.

Rider's coarse features changed from red to dingy white and back again, as he felt the clutch of Mr. Kasner's strong fingers.

"Look here, you let me go, will you—I ain't done nothin'!" he exclaimed, blusteringly.

"I haf not said you had," placidly answered the constable, "but shust now, Buck, it vos dang'rous times mit Fenians and dem tings, so lots of beoples vos carryin' conceal wepins, sech as revolvers and dynamite ca'tridge 'gainst der laws, so as von matters of vorm I shall haf you to show vot you carry in *your* pocket."

Grinding out an execration between his set teeth, Buck vainly sought to wrench himself free, and a less powerful man than Kasner would have had his physical energy severely taxed, for when thoroughly roused, Rider was possessed of an activity and strength far beyond his years.

"It vos no use," said Kasner, with a quick movement pinning the young ruffian's wrists in a grasp like a vise, "you know, once before, you dry dose littel game, und I put on the nippers—you keeps quiet or so I does now."

"Here, Con Badger, you sneakin coward," fiercely shouted Rider, struggling to free himself, "come here an' take this pipe outer my pocket, so it won't get broke. I'll show this blamed Dutchman that he ain't goin' to boss ev'rybody in this town—*come here, I say!*"

Con, with manifest unwillingness, shuffled to the side of Buck Rider, who, writhing and struggling in the fiercest manner, was bringing all Mr. Kasner's energies in play to keep him from twisting away.

"The—right—hand—pocket!" gasped Buck, with a warning look at his reluctant confederate.

Taking advantage of the constable's difficulty, Con plunged his hand into his friend's pocket, and with the pipe, pulled out the pocket lining as well—whether anything else, was best known to himself.

"Now hunt for your c'ncealed weep'ns and dynamite ketridges, growled Rider, suddenly ceasing his struggles, as Con Badger walked off without looking behind him.

"Dot makes no dif'rens, I does mine duties," was the imperturbable answer of the German.

Casting a rather mistrustful glance in the direction of departing Con, he began a thorough search of his now quiescent captive's pockets without finding anything more suspicious than a bunch of keys, an ugly looking jack knife with a four inch blade, and a rather more valuable silver watch than a young gentleman in Mr. Rider's circumstances might be expected to carry, so, with considerable reluctance, Mr. Kasner allowed his prisoner to go free.

"If I was wuth a little money," malevolently re-

marked Buck Rider, "I'd have you up for 'sault an' batt'ry 'fore tonight. But you didn't make much out of it any way," with a malicious grin, as he glanced at Mr. Kasner's coat, which he had succeeded in tearing from the collar to the cuff.

"I can vait—so can dese littel ornaments dat some days I shall put you on," grimly replied the constable, clinking together a pair of steel handcuffs in his coat pocket.

Rider laughed long and loud as he regained his companion, and the two walked away in company.

"I owe *you* one for this," he exclaimed, threateningly, as they passed Roy, who looked nearly as uncomfortable as Mr. Kasner himself, "and I'll pay you up some day, you young cub you."

"Very good," said Roy, with an air of indifference, though secretly he felt anything but easy in his mind, knowing as he did the revengeful nature of this young "town terror."

But Roy was a sturdy, courageous young fellow, manly and generous, though impulsive as we have seen, and he very soon dismissed the threat, which in reality was an idle one intended to frighten its recipient into submission.

Roy, with his sister Reba, were both orphans, their father having been a tolerably successful shipmaster, who went down, with his ship and all on board, in a gale off the Cape of Good Hope. Their mother, surviving the news of her husband's death but a short time, confided, with her dying breath, the two children to the care of Miss Cynthia Cole, the captain's maiden sister, who had been father and mother to them both.

CHAPTER IV.

ROY COLE OVERHEARS SOMETHING.

Mr. Kasner, the constable, stalked moodily away from the scene of his struggle with Buck Rider; while Roy struck into a bypath which, separated from the main thoroughfare by a belt of tall pines and hemlocks, ran parallel with it for some distance.

Half walking, half running, he followed along the well beaten foot path till the sound of voices and a boisterous laugh proceeding from the roadside, made known the near presence of Buck Rider and his companion. Roy had thus dodged their steps in the hope that possibly he might overhear their conversation, which would in all probability relate to recent events.

Thus far fortune had favored him, and cautiously parting the underbrush, Roy saw Buck Rider's sturdy form outstretched on the greensward at full length.

"Badger, you're a reg'lar brick," was the first remark that Roy caught; and again young Mr. Rider laughed loudly.

Con acknowledged the somewhat doubtful compliment by a slight shoulder shrug, and glanced suspiciously at Rider, as though a forgotten fact had suddenly occurred to him.

"Look here," he said, eying his comrade sharply; "ain't it about time to make a divvy of the money the lady gave you?"

"Blowed if I hadn't nigh forgot it," said Buck,

bringing himself upright with a jerk; "it's shoved down somewhere inside my vest pocket linin', I believe; let's see."

And the speaker began energetically searching for the bill which he had secreted in his tattered garments.

"But you've got considerable cheek to talk about makin' a divide, when it was me that took all the risk of stopping the hosses," suggested Rider, with a sneer, as suspending operations for a moment, he stared very hard at his companion, who was watching his every movement with close attention.

"You'd never got a cent only for me saying what I did," retorted Badger; "and talk about resk—there was a heap of that, considerin' that the reins caught in the wheel spokes, and hauled the hosses up so they was nigh standin' still when you grabbed the bridles."

"Oh, well, I'll do what's fair, of course," returned Rider. With some difficulty he succeeded in fishing out a folded bill from the torn lining, and with rather tremulous fingers opened and flattened it on his knees, eagerly watched by his distrustful companion.

"Well, *is* it a hunderd?" impatiently asked Con, as with a stony glare in his protruding eyeballs Buck Rider stared at the note in mute amazement.

"She ain't made a mistake, and give you a five hundred dollar bill!" almost shouted Con, springing to his feet in his excitement.

Still speechless, Buck, taking the bill between his fingers, extended it toward his expectant comrade. It was one of those rare occasions when the resources of the English language utterly fail to express the deeper feelings of the soul.

Casting one glance at the face of the greenback, Con Badger turned pale and uttered a hollow groan.

"Two dollars!" he gasped; "two mean, beggarly dollars," and in the anguish of his soul he uplifted his voice in a dismal howl, while Roy, in his hiding place, had hard work to choke down his laughter.

"Oh, hold your noise!" politely remarked Buck, snatching the bill from his companion's fingers and bestowing it somewhere about his clothing. "We'll get even with the old lady yet—hand over that bit of property I picked up."

Badger's brow clouded as though unpleasantly reminded of something momentarily forgotten.

"Take it," he said, shortly, and, drawing a soiled and faded silk handkerchief from his pocket, he tossed it at Rider's feet; "and all *I* wish is that I never'd laid eyes on it."

Roy's heart beat like a small trip hammer, as he watched Buck Rider.

Pouncing eagerly upon the handkerchief, Buck proceeded, with the aid of his strong white teeth, to untie a knot in one corner, from which he drew and held up, in all its flashing splendor, the missing cross.

"One, two, three—seven dimuns, and every one nigh as big as a marryfat pea," he exultantly exclaimed, touching the sparkling stones one by one with the tip of his finger.

"Another time," continued Con Badger, morosely, "you just keep what you get hold of in your own pocket, an' don't go to hollerin' for me to help you. I ain't none too squeamish, I allow, but the line's got to be drawn somewhere, and I don't go in for no such dangerous games as dimun stealing."

"Who's stole any dimuns?" was the surly rejoinder; "didn't I find this in the road—least I can say I did—and ain't I only keepin' it fer a day or two, till Mis' Stanhope puts out a notice sayin' how much she'll give to them that finds and returns it, hey?"

"Maybe, and maybe not," uncompromisingly returned Con; "but, to my way of thinkin', you're a sight more likely to keep it and try and sell it, specially if it's wuth what she said—six thousan' dollars. I'd like to know what it *is* wuth," he added, taking the cross between his own fingers and gazing at it with wondering admiration.

"Well," returned Rider, recovering the ornament with some abruptness, "when I was to Boston in old Peasley's coaster last trip I see a palish yellow dimun in a Washington Street store winder about the size of these here, labeled 'four carats an' a half—price six hundred dollars.' Now, prob'ly," he continued, with a cunning look, as he carefully knotted the valuable prize in a corner of the handkerchief again, "them fancy colored dimuns is wuth considerable more'n these white, common lookin' ones; so, makin' kind of a rough guess, I cal'late this whole arrangement ain't wuth over thirty six or seven hunderd."

Rider's conjecture was purposely made very wide of the mark in order to blind Con Badger's eyes to the real value of the ornament. Straw colored or yellow tinted diamonds, being known among the trade as "off color," are of less value than the clear white, whose brillancy and purity are far greater.

"Y-e-e-e-s," drawled Con, with a dubious shake of the head; "but all the same, it's takin' big resks, and I wish't we was well out of it; but the mischief's done, and there's nothin' now but to stow the thing away till the excitement blows over a bit—if it ever *does*"—the last in a lower tone.

"What's come to you lately," angrily exclaimed Rider, who, having thrust the handkerchief into his pocket, rose to his feet; "you never had no p'ticular grit, any way, and lately you're growin' more chicken hearted than ever."

"Matter!" repeated Badger, with a sudden energy

quite unusual; "well, seeing you want to know so bad, I'd as soon tell you now's any time. I'm sick—sick to death of livin' this way, with decent folks givin' me the go by all the time, and sneerin' about my fetchin' up in State pris'n before long, and all such talk—*that's* what's the matter."

Rider regarded his companion in mute astonishment for a moment.

"Well, we'll drop it for now," he continued. "Come on, and let's get back to the house—granny'll be waitin' supper by this time."

With a distrustful glance at the speaker, whose sudden outbreak had apparently taken him disagreeably by surprise, Buck Rider turned and the two walked down the road in moody silence in the direction of a crazy looking building at the extremity of the street. In old staging days the house had been a famous tavern, locally known as the "Beehive."

Roy Cole, after standing a moment in deep perplexity, began to walk slowly in the same direction, trying to decide what was the best and safest course for him to take in the matter. Should he inform against Rider, there was only his unsupported word against the two, who he felt pretty certain would not hesitate to perjure themselves if the emergency required it, at least he knew Rider would not; and then again, if he should take measures to have them arrested, the diamonds would be securely hidden away long before the constable could lay his hands upon the thieves.

"Reba and Aunt Cynthia will wonder what has become of me, but I *must* see this thing through," he said, half aloud, with a sudden air of determination and a quickened pace.

Taking advantage of a foot path "across lots," he arrived, breathless and panting, at the rear of the Beehive just as Badger and Buck Rider, reaching the

front, ascended the stairs leading to the habitable portion.

Now, the ancient structure consisted of the main building with the addition of a long wing, in the latter of which were the two or three desolate apartments occupied by Con Badger, the old woman he called his grandmother, and Buck Rider, a sort of tenant at will. The living room at the end of the wing, where it joined the house proper, opened by a door in which a window was inserted, looking into what had been the upper hall of the main building, which was partly unroofed.

CHAPTER V.

ROY PLAYS THE SPY.

Entering at the rear, and groping his way through the partial darkness of the rooms below, which were windowless and doorless, Roy softly climbed what had been the main staircase, and, reaching the landing, peered cautiously through the uneven folds of a torn curtain nailed on the window sash in the door. The bare but scrupulously neat interior was plainly revealed by the cheery glow from an old fashioned, open fireplace.

"Aunty Badger," as Con's grandmother was familiarly called, was a small, but vigorous old lady, nearly eighty years of age, very deaf and stone blind, though one could hardly realize this latter fact seeing her moving quietly about the dingy little rooms, sweeping, setting things to rights, and attending to other household duties.

Roy, secretly a little ashamed at playing the spy (though in this case perhaps the end justified the means), saw that the pine table, which was scoured to almost snowy whiteness, was set out with some cracked plates and mugs. A meal was probably in process of preparation in the big iron pot hanging above the blaze in the fireplace.

The good old lady was about lifting the kettle from the hook when Con, who had lingered a little on the landing place without, suddenly entered, followed by Buck Rider. The former removed the kettle and pour-

ed its contents, rabbit stew with plenty of onions, into a large shallow dish. This he placed on the table before his grandmother had quite recovered from her surprise.

"Why, Constant, dear heart, I did not hear thee come in," cried the good old lady, who had retained the "thee" and "thou" of her Quaker parentage. As she could hardly have heard the report of a six pound carronade in the cellar, this assertion did not surprise her grandson, over whose sullen features came something like a look of real tenderness as she spoke. Then, to Cole's inexpressible wonderment, Con Badger took the old lady's wrinkled face between his hands and touched his lips to her forehead. This tender salutation Con never omitted on entering the house, in spite of Buck Rider's ridicule.

Buck had no claim upon Aunty Badger or Con. Mrs. Badger had been left all alone in the world after her son John—the boy of her old age—was killed at Gettysburg. But for a government pension she would have perished from want in the New York tenement house, where for years she had just managed to keep soul and body together by sewing for cheap clothing stores, till her old fingers had at last refused duty. Mrs. Badger had shared her miserable room with a much younger woman, who, like herself, had seen better days, and who was dying with quick consumption. She was of English extraction, a widow with one son. Her husband had been an actor, she a professional singer; further than that Aunty Badger knew nothing. But when she died, Aunty Badger took the orphaned boy, named Constant Wharncliffe, for his father, without any formal adoption. To her he was an own grandchild; to the boy she was always "granny."

But "Con," as his mother had called him, growing up with evil associations on every side, gradually fell

into the ways of other boys in the army of street waifs. The worst among his boy associates was Buck Rider, who had no home but the streets, until, out of sheer pity, Aunty Badger gave him shelter, such as it was.

So time went on, till, when Con was about fourteen, Aunty Badger was seized with a terrible lingering illness, which left her stone blind, and almost totally deaf. When once more she grew stronger, the three —for Buck Rider clung like a burr—drifted to Burton. They paid a small weekly pittance for three rooms in the old Beehive, which belonged to Captain Prescott Bluster.

While I have stopped to make this necessary explanation, Aunty Badger had pushed three dilapidated chairs up to the table, upon which, in addition to plates, knives and forks, a battered tin teapot and a baker's loaf had been placed. Seating herself at the head of the table, Aunty Badger, with bowed head and folded hands, repeated the familiar: "Dear Lord, for what we are to receive make us truly grateful." Con preserved a respectful silence, while Buck Rider shuffled his feet impatiently.

"Cap'n Bluster was here for the rent today, Constant," remarked the old lady, placidly stirring her tea after the two were served. "We are two weeks behind, thee knows, Constant dear. He speaks so low, that I couldn't quite understand," she continued. "But I think he spake of calling again tonight."

"Needn't trouble himself," growled Rider, pouring out some tea; and a brief silence ensued.

"I expect thee and Buckingham, too, are tired enough after thy day's work," said Aunty Badger, turning her sightless eyes upon Con, for the good soul always thought of them as toiling all day in the woods, or in the employ of some farmer in the vicinity, for the scanty wages which, added to her own lit-

tle income, kept a roof over their heads, and bread in their mouths.

"Yes'm!" roared Con, unblushingly, in his grandmother's ear. The meal being ended, the three pushed back from the table.

"I'm goin' to put the—plunder in the old place," announced Buck Rider, and as Con's only sign of comment was a short nod, the former drew the silk handkerchief from his pocket. Roy flattened his nose against the outside of the door window, straining eye and ear alike, so as not to lose what was going on within.

Taking what seemed to be a home made imitation of a burglar's "jimmy" from a closet, Rider approached the fireplace, before which Aunty Badger was sitting, holding on her knees a Bible with raised letters, given her by the Burton minister.

The hearth stone, instead of being one broad slab of stone, was composed of four square sections of slate, snugly joined, though not cemented. Inserting the jimmy in one of the crevices, Rider pried up one of the sections almost at Aunty Badger's feet. Just as Buck drew the handkerchief from his pocket and dropped it into the cavity revealed by the removal of the stone, Aunty Badger repeated aloud, as she often did unconsciously, the particular text she was tracing with her sensitive finger tip:

"He that covereth his sin, shall not prosper."

Con gave a little start as he heard the unpleasantly apt quotation; but, quickly recovering himself, he stood with his hand on the mantel, moodily watching his companion as he replaced the stone.

Roy having now learned all he had been waiting for, tiptoed softly away from the door, groped his way down the old creaking stairs, and, passing through the rear doorway, started over the fields in the moonlight at almost racehorse speed.

CHAPTER VI.

A SURPRISING SCENE IN THE BEEHIVE.

"WHAT's the matter? What is it you're so plaguy glum about, Con?" surlily demanded Rider, as he replaced the "jimmy" in the closet, and turned toward his mute companion.

"*That*," returned Con, sharply, pointing at the hearth stone which covered the diamond cross; "for as sure's you'n' I live, Buck Rider, it'll get us into a scrape before we're through with it."

"You're always worryin' about shadders," replied Buck, airily, "and what's the use of it? Why don't you keep a stiff upper lip? You never see *me* gettin' scart at nothin', an'——"

"Hark!" interrupted Con, holding up his hand; "who's that comin' up stairs?"—which was not the correct way of putting it, for some one had already come up, and was groping for the door latch.

Turning quite pale, Rider dropped suddenly to the floor, and crept under the table with exceeding agility, as the opening door admitted Captain Prescott Bluster.

In his best moods, Con Badger disliked Captain Bluster fully as much as did three fourths of the Burton people, for not only was he a hard task master, but he was avaricious, overbearing and insolent toward all whom he considered socially beneath him.

So as Captain Bluster strode heavily across the

creaking floor and laid his hand rather rudely on Aunty Badger's shoulder, Con involuntarily set his teeth together and clinched his fists.

"See here, ma'am," shouted Captain Bluster, at the risk of breaking a blood vessel, "has your gran'-son come back yet?"

Aunty Badger looked up, with a thoughtful look on her careworn old face.

"He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches . . . shall surely come to want," she mechanically repeated, for her thoughts were wandering with the index finger of her tremulous hand among Solomon's Proverbs.

"I didn't ask for no preachin'," angrily shouted the captain, in such tones as he might use while hailing another ship in a gale off the Horn. "I want to know whether that loafin', long legged Con has come in yet."

Before the old lady, who had managed to understand part of the captain's question, could reply, Con, with a scowl, stepped forward.

"Yes, he's here—what of it?" he responded, in the most aggravatingly insulting manner.

"Oh, you've come, have you?" rejoined Captain Bluster, slightly disconcerted. "Well," he continued, recovering himself, "I want that three weeks' rent that's owin'. I s'pose you're ready to settle."

"I s'pose I ain't," was the tart reply, for it seemed to Con Badger, who, you must remember, had never learned to control himself, that he could not show strongly enough how thoroughly he detested the man who stood before him.

Captain Bluster opened his mouth, but no sound escaped therefrom, and for a moment he stood staring at Con's surly, defiant countenance in a state of helpless amazement. What was the world coming

to? This was the second time since morning that he had been bearded, so to speak, to his face, and that, too, as he mentally expressed himself, "by fellers no better'n paupers."

"Will you pay that three weeks' rent or won't you?" angrily demanded the captain, with a rising inflection of voice.

"No, I *won't!*" defiantly retorted Con, who would have answered in precisely the same manner if he had twice the sum demanded in his pockets. "Oh, you needn't grit them false teeth," he continued. "You ain't aboard ship now with a big fust mate to do the fightin' and a lot of old brok'n down sailors to beat and bruise with belayin' pins."

Captain Bluster was actually too angry to give verbal utterance to his passion, and again his livid lips formed words which—perhaps fortunately for all concerned—did not escape them.

"Good night, Constant dear," said the gentle voice of Aunty Badger, who, serenely unconscious of the conflicting elements about her, rose from the chair and entered her own little room, receiving the customary responsive shoulder pat from her grandson as she passed him.

Perfectly speechless with fury, Captain Bluster "yanked" a chair to the table, upon which he slammed a corpulent pocketbook. Then he seated himself and pulled open a large wallet stuffed with papers. He selected one, which he tossed at Con Badger's feet.

"There's your notice to quit these premises inside of thirty days, you—you—low vagabon'!" he said, in a voice choked with wrath. Con made no reply. Deliberately taking an old fashioned pair of tongs from the chimney corner, he picked up the document with them and dropped it behind the burning back log.

Captain Bluster was on the point of springing to his feet, when he was saved the exertion.

Rider, who had become very uneasy in his cramped position, and had gathered courage from listening to Con Badger's unexpectedly defiant speech, had softly changed his sitting position, till his hands and knees rested on the floor, while his back and shoulders touched the under side of the table.

Thinking to alarm Captain Bluster by a suggestion of the supernatural, Rider raised himself so violently that the light pine table shot upward with surprising force. In trying to dodge it, the affrighted captain fell backward over his chair to the floor, uttering a terrific cry, and the pocketbook went flying through the air as though discharged from a catapult, landing at the back of the broad mantel over the fireplace, entirely unnoticed by any one in the confusion. Buck Rider scrambled up, rubbing his eyes.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, as Captain Bluster rose to his feet. "Look's as though I'd kind of made a little disturbance 'thout meanin' to. I was takin' a snooze under the table," he explained with unblushing effrontery, as Con silently restored the article of furniture to its place, "and havin' a touch of nightmare must hev riz up kinder sudden in my sleep. Sort of scart you, didn't it, cap'n?"

"Where's my hat?" gasped the captain.

Buck Rider walked coolly across the room, fished the missing head gear out of the water pail into which it had fallen, and tendered it to its stupefied owner with a show of extreme politeness.

As Captain Bluster stood draining the water from the hat, heavy footsteps were heard on the stairway without.

Buck Rider's face turned to an ashy pallor, as his guilty conscience at once suggested who these unwonted visitors might be.

"Kasner and Bob Marshall the deputy with a search warrant!" he said in a tone of terror, and completely losing his self command, Rider sprang to the door and threw an oak bar into the iron clamps on either side the door frame.

Captain Bluster seemed to take in the situation at a glance.

"Aha!" he exultantly exclaimed. "*That's* the way of it, eh? So you two fellers *did* get off with Mrs. Stanhope's dimon' cross that I heard tell you was accused of knowin' somethin' about. It's me, Mr. Kasner," he continued, elevating his voice for the benefit of the two persons without, who were heard groping their way along the entry. "Me—Cap'n Prescott Bluster—hold on a bit and I'll let you in."

With these words he strode to the door, and pushing Con Badger aside as though he had been a child, he lifted the bar from its place. Rider seemingly quite paralyzed with terror, stood glancing undecidedly about the room.

Two men entered, but to the surprise no less than the relief of Con and his companion, they were not the visitors anticipated. Both were stoutly built and dressed in seafaring attire, their faces partly hidden by the upturned collars of their short pilot cloth coats, and the overhanging brims of the sou'wester hats worn by each.

As Captain Bluster stood mutely staring at the new comers, neither of whom had spoken upon entering, one of them coolly dropped the oak bar back into its place, and put his broad back against the door. The other glanced swiftly about him, looked sharply from under the brim of his oil skin hat at the astonished faces of Con Badger and Buck, and then walking with quick nervous steps to the door with the window in it on the opposite side of the room, locked it and dropped the key into a side pocket.

"Don't you two young fellers get scart," said the man with his back against the door, speaking in a muffled sort of voice from under the upturned collar, "it ain't neither of *you* that me'n' my shipmate is after overhaulin', it's that piratikle villain that's hangin' on to the chair back yander—our business is with him."

Captain Bluster's florid features took on an ashen pallor, and his large fingers trembled visibly as they convulsively clutched the chair back.

"Gentlemen," he began in quavering tones, "if this is a—a—plot for robbing a defenseless man——"

The strange visitor who had crossed the room to the opposite door, held up his hand as though to command silence. Stepping into the middle of the floor, he suddenly threw off his sou'wester, and the firelight disclosed the strongly marked features of a weather beaten looking man of fifty or thereabouts, with a beard plentifully sprinkled with gray, and piercing black eyes, looking out from beneath a pair of shaggy eyebrows.

"D'ye remember me, Cap'n Bluster," he said in a harsh rasping voice, staring the astounded captain full in the face, while his companion uttered a low chuckle of seeming enjoyment at the very evident effect upon the dismayed ex-shipmaster.

"It's—Louis Reece or his ghost!" hoarsely ejaculated Captain Prescott Bluster, dropping heavily into the chair. "Great Scott! I thought you were drownded!"

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE COURT.

"Yes, I'm Lewis Reece, and I ain't a ghost, neither yet drowned—no thanks to you, though," said the strange visitant to the Beehive in a tone of mingled exultation and bitterness as he stood regarding the dismayed captain; "and here's a shipmate of mine that maybe you thought you'd never see again—Mr. Tom Scott, Cap'n Bluster."

Mr. Scott, who was a wiry looking, sharp featured, well bronzed man of middle age, with a sinewy frame and uncommonly long arms, acknowledged the mock introduction by a familiar nod. "Oh, sit down—sit down, cap'n," he said, as Captain Bluster suddenly left his chair, and, to the manifest astonishment and gratification of Rider and Con, Mr. Tom Scott, placing his hands on Captain Prescott Bluster's broad shoulders, plumped him forcibly down on the chair.

"Now, boys," said the man called Lewis Reece, turning to the two; "Tom Scott, here, and I, have some private business with the cap'n, that can be done here jest as well as in his room up there to the hotel, where we was told that we'd be most likely to find him. Now, we want to hire this room an hour or so——"

"I object!" angrily interrupted the captain, as Mr. Reece, while speaking, slipped a five dollar bill from his vest pocket into the outstretched hand of Con Badger. "I object—these is *my* apartments, and—"

"You be quiet, now, will you?" remarked Tom Scott, in sharp, decided accents.

"Granny is asleep in her bedroom," said Con, indicating the little apartment at the left; "but she is blind and deaf both, so you won't be likely to disturb her."

"'Nless the cap'n hollers too loud when you git fairly to work on him," Buck Rider interposed, in an audible whisper, intended to reach the ear of Captain Bluster.

The captain, greatly alarmed at the suggestive hint, at once besought both Rider and Con Badger to notify the authorities to the effect that he, Cap'n Prescott Bluster, was in the power of two desprit men, who was seeking of his life.

"*Your* worthless life!" scornfully remarked Tom Scott. "Don't you be alarmed; Lewey an' I leave that job to some of the sailors you've beat and mauled in days past—more'n one of 'em is layin' for you to this day."

"The Burton authorities wouldn't trouble themselves none too much if you was to drop him overboard in broad daylight. He's made himself hateful all over town by his grindin' the face of poor folks, and holdin' hisself above them that don't happen to have so much money as he pretends to," cheerfully observed Buck Rider, as a parting shot.

"Good by, cap'n; hope you'll enjoy yourself," said Con, and with ironical nods to their crestfallen foe, the two left the room.

"Come on, let's go to the store," suggested Buck. The big corner store was a sort of gathering place for idlers, particularly in the evening, where, in addition to groceries and "notions," all the village gossip—no small amount, you may be sure—was retailed.

"Don't feel like it—I'm going to hang round till

they get through up stairs, and then go in and go to bed," responded Con. Rider, finding further persuasion useless, turned and walked away, much to Con's secret satisfaction, for his curiosity got the better of him and he had thought up a plan for finding out what was going on overhead.

Passing round behind the old building, Con entered and silently ascended the old staircase, as Roy Cole had done a little before. He felt his way through a side corridor in the wing till he reached and opened a door at the back of the little room where he and Rider slept. Pulling off his shoes, he then tiptoed across the floor to the opposite side of the room and placed himself before an aperture where the lathing and plaster were both missing, thus giving a full view of the interior of the small apartment where Captain Bluster was being interviewed by Mr. Reece and Tom Scott.

The fire had been replenished with some broken bits of boards and lathing, and before it, with his feet on the hearth, sat Lewis Reece, glancing at some papers which he had drawn from his pocket. Standing behind the chair in which Captain Bluster was sitting, Tom Scott was regarding the captain with a mixture of unbounded satisfaction and triumph.

"As I told you, cap'n," remarked Reece, breaking a short silence and looking up from his papers, "we mean for everything that's done here tonight to be square and above board, so I propose to have this 'ere bizness carried out as nigh accordin' to court rules and reg'lations as circumstances allows. Wherefore," he gravely continued, waving his hand affably in the direction of his companion, "I hereby app'int Thomas Scott, ex-mariner, the arbitrator in this present case. I grant to the pris'ner the privilege of acting as his own attorney, and further retain myself, Lewis Reece, as attorney for the plain-

tiffs, Reece and Scott, trustin' to the well known character of the last named for honor and veracity, not to allow the fact of his bein' arbitrator in the case to influence him in his final decision—so help you Heaven, Tom Scott." To which very singular harangue Mr. Scott answered: "I do," as though he were being sworn in court.

Laying down his pipe and clearing his throat, the self appointed attorney for the plaintiff turned his chair round so that he faced the prisoner, and proceeded to read with evident relish a sort of disposition or statement, which, divested of its legal terms, was in substance as follows:

"That, in the month of September, A. D. 1876, Lewis Reece and Thomas Scott, deponents, then following the occupation of submarine divers, recovered from the wreck of an English steamer, on the the coast of Australia, a sum of money in gold amounting to more than twenty thousand dollars; that they took passage from San Francisco in the ship Auriferous, Bluster master, confiding to his care the said amount of treasure, and receiving from him a written receipt therefor, as per certified copy annexed; that on a certain day and date the ship was becalmed, and said deponents got into the small boat, which was put over the stern, for the purpose of catching dolphin; that while so employed the ship was struck by what is known as an 'ox eye' squall coming without warning out of an almost cloudless sky, and all hands being sent to shorten sail, said deponents were obliged to remain in the boat, the ship being then nearly on her beam ends; and that during the height of the gale the deponents distinctly saw Captain Prescott Bluster, who was giving orders on the quarter deck, cast off the painter of their boat, crouching under the taffrail as he did so, unnoticed by the helmsman in the confusion; that said boat drifted to

leeward, and it was with the greatest difficulty she was kept afloat during the blow, which lasted till long after dark; that after five days of intolerable suffering from hunger, thirst and exposure they were picked up by the whaling ship Fabor and carried to San Francisco, where the Auriferous had already arrived.

"Deponents at once went on board, where they found that Captain Bluster had left the ship immediately on arrival, his place having been taken by a Captain Donald, who discredited the story told by deponents. Examination of log book (*vide* copy of entry annexed) was to the effect that two passengers —real names unknown, but supposed to be suspicious characters—were lost in gale (date given) by getting adrift in small boat, which probably foundered, the sea being very heavy and boat unseaworthy. Neither of them had paid passsge money (promising to do so on arrival), nor did either leave any personal effects excepting old clothes, which were divided among the crew. The men called themselves Reece and Scott —presumed to be fictitious names.

"This entry said deponents declare to be false in every particular, and refer to their own foregoing sworn statement. They further depose that since then they have diligently sought and caused search to be made for said Prescott Bluster thus far in vain, and that this deposition is given so that, in case of the death of either or both deponents, their legal heirs or representatives may seek for said Bluster, and, if found, him duly arraign, that he may account for said money by him concealed or embezzled, the same money having been the joint property of said deponents as they, being duly sworn, testified.

"Signed,

"Lewis Reece,
"Thos. Scott."

"Now, Mr. Arbitrator," said Reece, drawing a long breath, as he finished reading the document, to whose contents Con Badger, in his place of concealment, had listened with feelings of astonishment which cannot be described; "you've heard that deposition that was took before a magistrate in due form, which same is all the story or argiment I have to make on my side, or yours either, for that matter, so the rest of the proceedings can now go on at the discretion of the court."

And folding this important document, Mr. Reece placed it carefully with the others in an inside pocket, after which he replenished the fire, lighted his pipe, and signed Tom Scott, who was looking as wise and majestic as possible, to proceed.

"Pris'ner," remarked Mr. Scott, breathing forth a volume of tobacco smoke; "the court is now ready to listen to the argiment for and by the defendant."

"Look here," sullenly said Captain Bluster, lifting his eyes from the floor, and speaking with a sort of dogged desperation; "you two might jest as well stop this fooling and come down to plain English. Now, supposin' that I should admit, not that I do, mind you, but supposin' I should—that some things you've got writ down, is a kind of circumstantial evidence that would go against me in law, perhaps, and rather'n have a case like that brought into court, I'd be willin' to make some kind of compromise. How much would you two take, jintly, to give up them papers and hush the thing up?"

"How much do you call yourself wuth?" abruptly asked Reece, signing Tom Scott, who was opening his mouth to speak, to keep silence.

"Oh, well," returned the captain, hesitatingly; "what with the depreciatin' of navigation, and real estate bein' down next to nothin', I can't say I'm worth over—well, may be thirty thousan' dollars."

"You lie jest as easy as ever," remarked Mr. Reece, as affably as though he were paying Captain Bluster a compliment. "See here," he continued, with a sudden change of voice. "Scott and I have got as sharp a detective employed in this ma'ter as there is in New England, though he ain't generally known to the perfession: we drifted onto him quite by accident a spell ago, and it's he that's hunted you out in spite of all the pains you've took in buryin' of yourself in this little, out of the way place. He's found out pretty nigh to a dollar what you *are* wuth, and how much you're cheatin' the town out of. To begin with, there's about seventy five thousan' dollars layin' in Blackstone National Bank, in Boston, there's——"

"Never mind all that, Lewey," interrupted Scott, knocking the ashes from his pipe bowl; "let's make one short splice of the whole thing. We know what his bills of ladin' is, an' how much of it he pirated out o' you'n' me. Only you'n' me an' the Lord knows the mis'ry an' sufferin' we've been thru along of him, but that I'm willin' to let drop an' drift astern, if you be, an' he's ready to do the fair thing. Speakin' as a arbitrator on this case, an' takin' as a basis all this that we've talked over, I hereby adjudge to Lewis Reece and Thomas Scott jintly, to be paid out o' the pris'ner's property, the even sum o' twenty five thousan' dollars, which won't begin to cover damage, interest, an' expenses of searchin' from pillar to post to find his whereabouts, which I declare my final verdic' an decree."

Mr. Reece softly patted his hands together in token of approval; Tom Scott, with his head a little on one side, critically regarded the crimson face of Captain Bluster, who was gasping for breath.

"Air you—er—egregious idjuts?" exclaimed the captain, regaining his wind; "or be you——"

"You've got from now till a week from Monday

night to make up your mind what you'll do," said Lewis Reece, cutting his victim's angry exclamations very short. "If you'd rather fight it in law," he continued, affably, "well and good; Tom an' me has got quite a pile more of everdence layin' back. If you take up with our offer our mouths is shut, we give up the papers, an' you can go on cheatin', lyin', and oppressin' of poor folks, till you've made up what we perpose to take out o' you. There's no more to be said—court's adjourned."

Rising to his feet, Mr. Reece began buttoning up his coat and adjusting his "sou'wester," while Captain Bluster, with a smothered oath, jammed his moist hat over his ears and started for the door.

"One minute, cap," interrupted Tom Scott, with easy familiarity; "I jest want to add that this here detective party who is shadderin' of you, don't cal'late to lose sight of you *too* long to a time, an' you might jest as well think of gettin' away from that evil conscience of yourn as to give *him* the slip." With which gentle admonition Mr. Scott ushered the unfortunate captain out with extreme politeness, and shortly afterward took his own departure, accompanied by Lewis Reece.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INVADER IN THE COLE HOMESTEAD.

From the Beehive to the Cole homestead is but a step, metaphorically speaking, though in reality there are several, as the latter house stands some little distance away.

Though the hands of the tall clock in the corner of Miss Cynthia Cole's pleasant, old fashioned sitting room were pointing suggestively in the direction of the hour of ten P. M., the kerosene lamp on the center table was still alight, and the blaze of well seasoned beech "chunk" threw cheery reflections against the background of shadow on the oak wainscoting.

Sitting in the stiffest and most uncompromising chair in the room, was Miss Cynthia Cole, who outwardly seemed stiffer and more uncompromising than the mahogany backed chair itself. But though to strangers she appeared thus, the tall spinster had "a heart the size of a wash tub, and as soft as one of her own live geese feather pillows," to use the words of her nephew. On the eventful evening I have described, Roy lay outstretched at easy length on the old sofa, his head pillowed in the lap of his sister Reba, who was two years older—and, as Roy gravely asserted, ten years wiser than himself.

From her beautiful Cuban mother, Reba had inherited her clear cut, brunette features, jetty black hair and eyes, and lithe, erect figure. Roy, on the contrary, "favored his father," being of sturdier

build, with brown hair slightly inclined to curl at the ends, honest blue eyes, a ruddy complexion, and a good, square business-like forehead. Not a brilliant boy nor a dreamer, but one with plenty of energy, honesty and "go" in his make up, when the time shall come for taking some decisive part in the battle of life.

An easy chair had been brought in for the special use and behoof of the young school teacher, with whom we are already somewhat acquainted. Mr. Morris already began to feel quite at ease in his new surroundings, and was exerting himself, with marked success, to win the good will and confidence of those with whom he had taken up his abode. In one thing, however, Mr. Morris was not perfectly open and frank.

For his presence in this little out of the way town was not due to chance. The fact is, that having been wrongfully suspected of being the ringleader among some naughty students, (they had securely fastened an obnoxious tutor into his room, and played on him from a garden engine hose introduced at the window), Mr. Morris had been recommended by the faculty to try change of air and scene for a season. In reality he had nothing whatever to do with the matter, further than a knowledge of its intended preparation, but rather than betray his classmate who was the real offender, Morris had suffered the consequences to fall on his own shoulders.

Hearing of Burton-by-the-Sea from one of his classmates, he had sought out the sea board village, partly as a quiet abiding place for the summer months, and, in part, moved by a secret desire to try his own system of discipline in regard to school teaching, in a community where a majority of the scholars were disposed to rule.

But Mr. Morris kept all these last named matters to himself.

The hours flew by more quickly than usual, in listening to Mr. Morris's pleasant flow of entertaining talk, and every one was surprised when Miss Cynthia Cole abruptly announced that it was time honest folks were in bed, and stalked out of the room, followed by Mr. Morris, after he had bade the two remaining occupants a pleasant "good night."

"He's very pleasant," said Reba, standing gracefully erect, and looking thoughtfully into the smoldering fire, after Roy had regained an upright posture, "and I should think he might make a good teacher. I heard some one say that he is poor, but had a rich uncle who was helping him through college——"

"Oh, never mind Mr. Morris, Reba," impatiently interrupted her brother. "He's well enough—there's something I want to tell you about, and I thought they never would go. I suppose you heard down town about Mrs. Stanhope's horses running away?"

"Yes; Mrs. Smith was speaking of it while I was at the post office," was the quiet reply.

"Well, now, look here, Reba," said her brother, drawing her down beside him on the sofa, "I've got something to tell you that will make you open your eyes, I guess. You see," and then, beginning with Mr. Morris's bicycle, he narrated the entire story as we are acquainted with it.

"Why, it don't seem possible that Buck Rider, bad as he is said to be, would dare to keep and dispose of anything so valuable as the cross must be," exclaimed Reba.

"Oh, he'd dare do most anything if he thought he wouldn't get caught," returned Roy, "though I'm not so sure as I used to be about Badger. A fellow that seems to think as much of his grandmother must have *some* good in him.

"But, Reba," continued her brother, lowering his voice as he plunged into the subject that had been uppermost in his mind all the evening, "now listen; I've thought it all over, and made up my mind this way: It's no use to take the chances of having Kasner go to the Beehive with a search warrant, and find out after all that they'd hid the cross away somewhere else. No," continued Roy; "I'm going to try to get hold of the cross my own self in a way that I've been studying out, and if things work right, I mean to attempt it tomorrow—the sooner the better, you know;" and then Roy told her his plan.

"If tomorrow was any day but Sunday," thoughtfully returned Reba, resting her cheek in her hand. "Well," she went on half seriously, "you must let me dream on it, dear, and in the morning I'll tell you what I think." For Reba had a peculiarly sensitive organization which impelled her to invariably carry her little perplexities and questionings with her across the border land of sleep.

In the morning there was no appeal from whatever decision she had arrived at, and it was noticeable that the result almost invariably proved Reba in the right.

"Well, dear," said Reba, rising, "it is long past bed time, and—oh, I had almost forgotten to tell you," she said, suddenly checking herself. "Only think, Roy," she continued, "Captain Prescott Bluster was here this afternoon and fairly insisted that Aunty Cole should sell our old homestead here to him. He wants to tear down the house and put up a summer hotel."

"Does he, though?" indignantly cried Roy. The sturdy old building which had weathered the storms of more than a century was very dear to the three remaining representatives of the family. "I rather guess you and I, Reba, would have something to say

about that, for by the terms of father's will Aunt Cynthia holds it in trust for us after we become of age."

Reba's black eyes shone with suppressed mirth.

"Oh, Roy," she exclaimed, "you should have seen Aunt Cynthia—she stood this way."

Drawing herself stiffly erect and squaring her arms in front of her, Reba elevated her dimpled chin and glared severely at her amused brother over the bows of her aunt's spectacles, which she had caught up and placed in position.

"Cap'n Bluster," said Reba, in a sharp falsetto, "if you think or like to have other folks think that you can buy what part of this little village you don't own by foreclosin' mortgages, you're consider'bly mistaken, that's all. I don't cal'late to sell the place, to begin with, and if I did, *you* shouldn't have it if you offered ev'ry cent you're wuth in the world."

"What *did* old—I mean Captain Bluster say?" asked Roy with a rapturous chuckle.

Off flew the spectacles, down dropped the dimpled chin, and Reba's fair forehead was suddenly disfigured by a deep frown, as she repeated Captain Bluster's reply in a very deep, gruff voice:

"Miss Cole, I presume you know that a gentleman in my—er—social and pecooniary position don't intend to be defied to his face by no plebeian single woman. In overhaulin' the town records, ma'am, me and my attorney has found a flaw in the title of this property, and before another two years is gone, I'll have the whole parcel of you turned out of doors, or else this old rattle trap of a house will be pulled down over your ears—*good* day, mum."

As Reba's face assumed its usual appearance, Roy's grew rather grave.

"I wonder what he meant by that?" he said, thoughtfully.

"Oh, he only wanted to frighten us into selling," laughed Reba, "but he don't know Aunt Cynthia as well as you and I, Roy." And kissing her brother good night, Reba raked up the ashes over the smoldering back log, after which the two sought their respective chambers.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRE AT THE BEEHIVE.

One glance at his sister's face, as he took his seat at the breakfast table next morning, told Roy that her decision regarding his projected plan was an unfavorable one. After the meal, Roy, in a disturbed frame of mind, walked out on the front portico, where he was followed a few moments later by Reba.

"Then you don't approve, eh, Reba?" said Roy, compressing his lips a little.

"I don't think it will be wise, or right, Roy," was the steady reply, "and something seemed to tell me, while I was thinking it over, in my sleep, that doing wrong, even so that good may come of it, never turns out well in the end."

"But, Reba," urged Roy, "there's another thing to be thought of. Knowing, as I do, where the cross is, and all about it, it is my duty to try and see that the owner gets it back again. Now, if I went and entered a complaint, and Kasner should find the cross where I saw it hid away, why that means about the same as State's prison for both those chaps, for Rider would contrive to make Con out as guilty as himself, and that would about break old Aunty Badger's heart, to say nothing of her being left alone in her old age and poverty. Now I watch a chance while the two fellows are away, get the cross, send it anonymously to Mrs. Stanhope, or else take it myself and make her promise to keep the whole mat-

ter a secret, and there'll be no more trouble about it. Rider or Dick wouldn't dare to say anything about it, and they'd never know who took it, either."

"Yes, dear, I know," returned Reba, with a little contraction of the forehead, "but it don't seem clear to me, somehow. I wish there was some one we could ask about it who could tell us what would be best. You wouldn't dare to speak to Mr. Morris?" she said, inquiringly; but Roy shook his head decisively.

"No sir," he said, "I don't intend to speak of it to any one. Let it drop for now; I'll think it over again." So Reba held her peace, and opening a book she had brought out with her, was soon absorbed in its pages.

After dinner Roy brought his own book out on the pleasant piazza, where they were joined a little later by Mr. Morris, who declared that the sea view was as fine as any he had ever seen. This led to quite a talk about foreign scenes and incidents, Mr. Morris having evidently traveled quite extensively for so young a man.

"A friend was good enough to take me with him on a European tour, or I am not sure that I should ever have seen all these things. Men who wear such shabby clothes as these, are not apt to spend much money in travel," he laughingly said, with a glance at his neat fitting, but more than well worn suit.

The remark confirmed Reba in what she was beginning to be quite positive about, viz: that Mr. Morris's means were decidedly small.

Roy had paid little or no attention to the remark. Laying down his book, he took up a spy glass and pointed it to the mouth of the harbor.

"There go Rider and Badger off on their regular Sunday cruise in the Wild Rover, and likely as not

they won't be back till long into the night, for the wind is well off shore, and the tide on the flood," he said to himself. "Now what better chance——"

But he did not finish the thought just then. Joining in the conversation, he bided his time till after supper, when Miss Cynthia, taking Reba with her, and a covered basket, started off on some one of the errands of mercy for which she was noted; said errands taking the form of little gifts of various home made dainties to tempt the palate of the sick or suffering. Mr. Morris retired to his room, as he said, to "do up" some correspondence. Roy pulled his hat over his eyes and made his way down the quiet and nearly deserted street in the direction of the Beehive.

Glancing about him to see that he was unobserved, Roy ran lightly up the stairway and entered the room without knocking, as a matter of course, as Aunty Badger's extreme deafness made the ceremony an utterly needless one.

He has since said that never—no never in his whole life has he felt so mean as when he entered the room where Aunty Badger was sitting in her accustomed place, slowly tracing with her tremulous fingers the words from the inspired pages before her. There was no lamp lighted, for daylight and darkness were the same to her obscured vision, but the firelight, dancing and flickering weirdly across the hearthstone, was sufficient for Roy's purpose.

Comforting himself by mentally repeating the arguments he had used to Reba, Roy found the "jimmy" in its place. He could hardly rid himself of a consciousness that Aunty Badger must know what he was doing as she sat within two or three feet of him. He trembled with excitement, as he pried up the square of the flagging. Yes, the handkerchief was there, with the knot in the corner! Reaching down,

he seized and thrust it into an inside pocket, then replaced the square of stone, put the "jimmy" carefully back in the closet, and, with another glance at Aunty Badger's peacefully unconscious face, started for the door.

"FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!"

Surely that was Captain Prescott Bluster's hoarse and powerful voice, sounding from the street below, and reinforced by a dozen others! At the same instant Roy saw through the glass half of the opposite door, a great column of flame shoot up from the tumble down building. Driven by the strong breeze it burst through the glass, and began licking up the wood work of the room where sat Aunty Badger! Leaning back in her old rocker, she had closed the Bible while she murmured softly to herself the last text upon which her finger had rested:

"For there shall no evil befall thee. . . . He shall give His angels charge concerning thee to bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Roy saw that not a moment was to be lost, for the room itself was already filling with smoke.

Rushing to Aunty Badger's side, with a strength born of the excitement of the moment, he picked her up bodily from the chair. She gave a feeble cry of alarm, as she clasped her withered fingers convulsively about her cherished Bible, but Roy, unheeding, hurried with her through the entry and down the stairs, into the narrow street, which, to his surprise, was entirely deserted. Every one had flocked to the front of the main building with useless buckets and pails of water, there being no fire department of any description in the village.

"The house is afire, aunty!" Roy yelled in the old dame's ear, as she feebly struggled in his grasp.

Roy saw her lip quiver.

"Thank God, Constant, dear heart, that thou art

saved—and Buckingham, too?" she murmured, interrogatively, to which Roy, without trying to explain, shouted "yes!"

Pausing occasionally to recover his breath, he hurried with his burden across the field to his home, which was the nearest available place of refuge. He deposited her on the steps safe and sound, though trembling like an aspen leaf, and then he dropped beside her quite limp and exhausted.

Miss Cynthia, who had returned with Reba, swooped down upon them both from the front door. Without further ceremony, she picked poor Aunty Badger up in her strong arms and carried her into the house; while Roy, after recovering himself a little, for once unheeded Reba's anxious questions, and hurried quickly past her, and up stairs to his own room.

Where should he hide his treasure till morning? No ordinary lock or fastening would seem secure enough for anything so valuable.

Casting his eyes about the plainly furnished room with its cumbrous old time furniture, they rested upon a pair of pink lipped shells, sometimes called the "King's Conch," that were lying on the rug at either side of the open grate.

"No thief would ever think of looking inside a sea shell for valuables," he said to himself. Pulling out the handkerchief with its knotted corner, Roy stuffed it hastily into the crevice of the shell, just out of sight, and then hurried down stairs. Reba received him warmly, and his aunt with a volley of questions.

"How did the fire catch? Who saw it first? Was *that* Rider and Con Badger at home?" and finally, "how *did* the old lady get down stairs?"

While Roy, in a rather shame faced and embarrassed way, was explaining his part in saving Aunty Badger, and trying, by various and irrelevant an-

wers, not unnoticed by Reba, to account for his prompt appearance on the scene of action, Captain Bluster, with a face which looked almost deathly pale in the white heat of the burning building, was rushing to and fro in a seeming paroxysm of excitement. This could hardly be accounted for by the mere loss of the building, for it was insured for more than double its actual value.

Captain Bluster hoarsely exclaimed that after discovering the fire (he happened to be passing the Beehive on his way to the hotel) and giving the alarm, his first thought had been that Aunty Badger was probably in her room alone, as he had seen her grandson and Buck Rider going off in a boat toward sundown. Thereupon he had rushed round to the side door and tried to ascend the staircase, but to his horror the whole wing was one mass of seething flames, and even the stairs were beginning to blaze. So he was beaten back by the fire and smoke.

If he had been on the spot a moment sooner, he might have seen Aunty Badger being brought from the burning building by Roy Cole, but, unaware of the fact, Captain Prescott Bluster, with a horror stricken face which was by no means feigned, acted for a few moments like a madman.

"I'd give a hunderd dollars outer my own pockit this minit," he groaned, drawing his sleeve across his white, perspiring face, as he looked about him, "yes, *two* hunderd, if that old woman could a ben——"

There was the sound of a cracking and splitting and rending asunder of burning beams and rafters. The half consumed walls shriveled and swayed for a moment, and then, as the crowd retreated to a safe distance, there came a great crash as the walls fell inward, sending a fiery column of sparks toward the sky.

"Lord rest her sowl!" said Micky Dolan, reverently removing his cap and dashing a tear from his smoke begrimed face with his hard hand. "It's lucky them young fellers was off'n the boat by the same token," he added; but the nearest bystander only shrugged his shoulders, and, as the fire began to wane, so did the interest of the spectators. There were no houses in the immediate vicinity that were in any danger from flying sparks, so the crowd began slowly dispersing.

Doctor Osborne, who had come to the fire in his dressing gown and slippers, walked slowly homeward with Augustus Stanhope, who seemed in an unusually thoughtful mood.

"Captain—er—Bluster's building was well insured; two thousand dollars I heard Mr. Dobbs, the agent, say," he remarked, meditatively, and as the doctor, who was in one of his brown studies, only said "Ah, yes," and relapsed into silence.

"He's a very rich man, isn't he, Doctor Osborne?" asked Augustus.

"Richest man in Burton," was the brief reply. "Good night."

"Good night," absently repeated Augustus, as the doctor turned in at his own gate. "Insured for two thousand dollars," mused the youth, as he walked slowly onward in the direction of the Widow Smith's house, which was near at hand. "I wonder what folks would say if I should tell about picking up the little kerosene can that he dropped when he came round the corner of the house and met me so suddenly. Well—this is a funny world, any way."

And after passing this amiable verdict upon the affairs of the universe in general, in strict confidence to himself, Augustus dismissed the subject for the time, and letting himself in at the front door of Mrs. Smith's house, retired to his virtuous couch.

CHAPTER X.

A TURNING POINT FOR CON BADGER.

The Wild Rover being delayed, as Roy Cole had foreseen, by the headwind and tide combined, did not reach the wharf till midnight. Rider and Con Badger, who were its occupants, had been watching the fire with painful apprehensions, as the boat beat slowly up the harbor. They saw, on nearing the landing place, that, as they had both feared from its location, it was indeed the old Beehive.

Scarcely waiting to make the boat fast, the two scrambled up on the wharf, and ran toward the smoldering ruins as fast as their legs would carry them.

"It vos all right, Con Badger," said the familiar voice of Mr. Kasner, who had lingered about the scene of the fire to make sure that there was no further danger from flying sparks; "the ol' lady vos come out safe—dot young Cole bring her down shtairs and carry her over to his aunt's."

Con Badger breathed a great sigh of relief, and unconsciously uttered under his breath a "thank God," for the first time in his whole life. Buck Rider did not speak or stir, but stood gazing at the confused heap of scattered bricks from the fallen chimney, under which, buried from sight probably forever, lay Mrs. Stanhope's diamond cross.

Very different thoughts were in Con's mind, as he stood mutely by the ruins.

"I don't care a button, so long as granny is safe,"

he finally exclaimed aloud, as a sort of relief to his overstrained feelings. He wiped a suspicious moisture from his eyes, as he thought how near Granny Badger had been to a terrible death.

"Blessed if he ain't snivelin'!" exclaimed Rider, with a sneer that did not improve his personal appearance in the least.

"It's nothing to you if I am," was the angry rejoinder; "*you* wouldn't have cared if granny had been burned to a crisp, for all you've been beatin' your livin' out of her and me for nigh three years, without as much as a 'thanky' to pay for it."

With a great effort Buck swallowed his anger, and speedily proceeded to effect a change of base.

"Oh, well, old feller," he remarked in a friendly manner, "there's no need of gettin' your back up. I'm glad the ol' lady's safe of course; but what's worryin' me," dropping his voice, "is that our dimun speculation is likely to drop through. I'm afraid we'll never lay eyes on that air cross again."

"*Your* dimun speculation, you mean," was the uncompromising reply, "for I didn't an' don't want anything to do with that kind of work, as I told you."

Just then Con Badger's mind was busy with the far more important question of how to provide shelter for Granny Badger and himself. "Buck Rider must look out for *himself* now," thought Con, with something like inward satisfaction, "and that way I hope we can shake him off altogether. I'll never be decent till I do;" "decent" being the one word in Con's vocabulary which expressed a turning from wrong to right doing.

"I'm going to sleep on Bunker's hay mound till morning," said Con, after a brief pause, turning, as he spoke, toward a large barn adjoining a neat looking one story house a short distance away.

"I guess I will, too," responded Buck, affecting not to notice Con's distant manner; and, as the barn door was unfastened, both were soon under cover, and fast asleep on the hay.

Con was first awake, and, having made his toilet at the pump, accepted, with awkward thanks, Mrs. Bunker's hearty proffer of a meal.

After this, leaving Rider still snoring, he hurried over to the Cole homestead. Breakfast was just over. Miss Cynthia, wearing a long "bib" apron, was energetically rattling the breakfast things in a large dish pan of water near the open kitchen window at the front of the house. This looked directly out over the widespread sea.

Aunty Badger, with a look of quiet resignation on her wrinkled face, sat in an easy chair in a sunny spot on the piazza, with Reba leaning thoughtfully on the back of the chair, while Roy, in a deep study, was walking backward and forward, whistling softly to himself.

Con Badger, whose head was full of new thoughts, did not notice the involuntary start that Roy gave, as he noticed the approach of the new comer.

With a passing glance full of affection at Granny Badger, he walked quickly up to Roy and looked him square in the face.

"Look here," he said, with a sort of rude pathos, so entirely out of keeping with his usual manner of address, "you know the kind of name Burton folks give me, like everybody else. May be if I hadn't been brought up in the city slums, I'd have growed up—decent, and I wish I had. But there's this much," continued the ne'er do well, with another look at the peaceful face of Aunty Badger, "Kasner told me it was you who saved granny——"

Here something choked Con's utterance as he came to a full stop, while Miss Cole at the open window,

unable to believe the evidence of sharp eyes and ears, actually dropped the tea cup she was wiping, exclaiming, in an emphatic undertone:

"Well, if that don't beat all natur'!"

"I said then," Con went on, controlling himself with an effort, "that I wouldn't never forget it, and I won't."

He extended his hand abruptly, and Roy, too much embarrassed to make any direct reply, shook it heartily. Then Con walked directly to Granny Badger's side, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"I thought thee would come, Constant dear," said Aunty Badger, with a tremulous smile, "my brave boy, who risked his life to save an old woman like me."

"It wasn't me, it was Roy Cole, granny!" bawled Con, with all the strength of his lungs, and Aunty Badger shook her head.

"Cold, dear heart?—It's nice and warm here, and Miss Cynthia is so good," she said, with pathetic earnestness. "Con," the good old lady went on, "when thee says thy prayer of thanks for our safety, don't thee omit to ask a blessing for these dear friends who have given us shelter, will thee?"

Con Badger's face crimsoned with an entirely new emotion—that of shame, and he was conscious of a sudden wish that he could sink quietly down through the piazza planking and come out somewhere at the antipodes, as Reba, whose eyes were moist with tears, looked steadily at him.

Miss Cynthia, who had heard it all, compressed her thin lips.

"It's my duty to alw'ys speak a word in season, and I never s'rink from no known duty," she murmured, as she laid aside the cup towel, twitched off her apron and stepped through the entry out on the piazza.

"Con Badger," began the determined female, folding her arms and bending her sharp eyes on the subject of her remarks, who looked still more perturbed under her gaze, "you've got as bad a reppitation as any feller of your age in Burton, exceptin' that Buck Rider, who'll be the entire ruin of you if he ain't be'n a'ready."

"Oh, aunty," whispered Reba, as Con's face slowly began to take on a half sullen, half defiant look; but Miss Cynthia continued her harangue quite unflinchingly:

"It's nigh time some one spoke plain to you, as I'm doin'—for your own good, may be. For somebody ain't always as black's he's painted, accordin' to the old sayin', and I ain't so sure but that's your case. Now, Con Badger, if you're a min' ter take a start *now*—not waitin' for the tomorrer that never comes—you can make today a turnin' p'int in your whole life. It'll be uphill work for a spell. Folks won't believe in you. Buck Rider and sech fellers'll do their best to hold you back, but folks worse'n you be has turned over a new leaf, and made a clean record thenceforth, and there's no reason *you* can't. If I was you I'd begin this very day, and turn over that new leaf—if you do, you'll find plenty of us to give you a hand—that's all."

And quite out of breath with the rapidity of her utterance, no less than her forcible speech, Cynthia vanished through the doorway, leaving Con speechless and confounded.

"We, Roy and I, wish you *would* try, Con," said Reba, her sincerity shown in her speaking eyes and face; and very much to Con's astonishment, it was Roy this time who put out his hand to him.

"I *darsen't* promise," he returned, shaking his head. "It's hard turnin' black to white; besides, I'm in kind of a muddle, and have got to study it out for

myself. But if you'll ask Miss Cynthy to let granny stay here a little spell longer——"

"She can stay here as long as she wants to," snapped Miss Cynthia from the window. "Poor old thing, she won't stay very long anywheres on this subloonary sphere," softly added the spinster. "The shock and fright of that fire has numbered her days —any one with half an eye can see that."

"Thank you, Miss Cynthy," was the grateful reply: "it'll only be two or three days. I'm thinkin' up a plan for gettin' us a place to live in——"

"You're not goin' to take that Rider feller in again!" sharply interrupted Miss Cynthia from the window.

"No, ma'am," emphatically answered Con, "he's sponged his livin' out of us long enough. Whether I do dif'rent or not," he continued, awkwardly, with his eyes bent on the ground, "I won't forget what's been' said to me this morning, and p'raps——"

Without concluding, Con patted Aunty Badger's shoulder, shouted "good by, granny," in her ear, and turning abruptly away, walked down the road without once looking back.

CHAPTER XI.

SCHOOL OPENS STORMILY.

"BLUE Monday." So, at least, it seemed to several individuals in Burton, who were personally interested in three separate notices which were tacked against the inside walls of the Burton post office.

The first notice read thus:

The opening session of Town School will begin Monday, May 27th, at 9 a. m. Scholars requested to be present punctually with their books.

EDWARD MORRIS, Teacher.

For, having posted the above, Mr. Morris had to acknowledge a sensation of blueness as he began to fully realize that for an inexperienced school teacher he had undertaken a task of no little magnitude, if half that had been told by Miss Cynthia Cole on the preceding day proved true.

Mrs. Stanhope, who had written her husband a full account of her loss, had also sent him the following telegram:

"Have lost my diamond cross. What reward shall I offer?" In reply came the following: "Offer $2,000." In accordance with which advice this second placard greeted the eyes of the Monday morning post office visitants:

TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD!

For the recovery of a diamond cross lost Saturday 25th inst., between the Burton Hotel and residence of Mr. Dobbs. Said cross was composed of seven large diamonds in a solid gold setting. MRS. JOHN STANHOPE AT MRS. JARED SMITH'S.

And it is needless to say that Mrs. Stanhope felt blue.

The third announcement was this:

LOST!

A large Black pocket book probably between the Burton Hotel and the reuins of the so called Beehive, containing papers of no Value to any buddy but the Oner also a small sum of Munny twenty five dollars will be pade For its return to captain Prescott Bluster Room 11 Burton hotel.

For so thrown from his mental base was Captain Bluster by the startling events of the previous Saturday evening, that, though he could not distinctly remember picking up his pocketbook after the overthrow of the table, he was almost positive that he must have done so. But if he had left it on the floor, Rider or Badger had of course secured it, and as the papers were of no value to them, and the reward offered was large, he would probably get it back. And in the event that it had been burned—why there was no help for it.

"Confound it!" thought the irate captain; "it never rains but it pours, and on top of all must come the demand of those two men who I supposed were at the bottom of the ocean!"

Captain Bluster groaned in spirit as he thought how completely they had him trapped. The two thousand dollars of insurance money which he expected would help out a little—but twenty five thousand dollars at one big slice—it was *awful*—awful! It was an unpleasant Monday for Captain Bluster.

And Roy Cole, too. Reflection had shown him in what a perplexing situation his hasty act regarding the diamond cross had placed him, and he heartily wished he had never laid eyes or fingers on it. He knew that when he came to tell Reba about it and ask her further advice—as he meant to do that very day—she would look reproachfully at him from her dark, serious eyes.

Even Miss Cynthia's unemotional temperament was a little tinged with the prevailing hue, as she remembered Captain Bluster's threat regarding the Cole homestead. After breakfast she began to look over a file of papers, yellow with age, that were pigeonholed in the old secretary. As far as her limited knowledge of such things went, the title deeds of the homestead appeared all right, from the original parchment signed with the "token" or mark of Annisquam, an Indian chief, more than two centuries before, down to Captain Cole's will, executed before the voyage on which he was lost. Yet Captain Bluster had hinted at a "flaw in the title," and this caused her no little mental uneasiness.

And finally, Mr. Buckingham Rider felt decidedly blue, as, awakening some time after sunrise, he sat bolt upright on Mr. Bunker's hay mow, and the recollection of what had happened the night previous flashed across his mind. The probable loss of the diamonds, and the actual loss of a lodging place where it had cost him comparatively little or nothing to live, these, together with the unpleasant prospect of having to go to work, sat heavily upon him.

"All Con cares is to get the old woman looked out for; it's no matter whether I'm provided for or not," he growled, with a strong inward sense of personal injury. Then he made his way down to the wharf, remembering that enough of the previous day's lunch remained in the stern locker of the Wild Rover to furnish him with breakfast.

The Wild Rover was a clinker built boat some twenty two feet in length, cat rigged and broad beamed; a good sailor and tolerably stanch in a sea way. Properly speaking, the little craft belonged by right of possession to Con Badger, who now and then had earned a few dollars by acting as foremast hand in Captain Lewis's coasting vessel.

On one of these trips Con, who was at the wheel, had discovered the boat drifting aimlessly about in the fog somewhere off Mount Desert Rock, and upon running down to her it was discovered that no one was on board. So she was taken in tow back to Burton. By mutual agreement Captain Lewis, who owed Con about twenty five dollars, agreed that the boat should be his part of the "salvage," the captain taking the trawl line, worth some forty or fifty dollars, as his share.

Since then the Wild Rover, as Con had named his boat, had always been used in common by Con and Rider, who not infrequently caught a supply of fish off the shoals at the mouth of the harbor, which they ran into Portland and disposed of; or took a few hundred porgies in a drift net and sold them to the shore fishermen who used them for bait.

After swallowing the remnants of the Sunday lunch, Rider lighted his pipe, stretched himself out at lazy length in the boat's stern sheets, philosophically determining to take it easy and see what might turn up during the day.

A small forty ton schooner was moored to the wharf close by, from the open companionway of which emerged a bare headed, roughly dressed young fellow, a year or two younger than Buck, who, after a prolonged yawn, strolled to the vessel's side, and greeted Rider with a nod.

"Hello, Brisket!" called the latter; "goin' to get off to day?"

"No," replied the young fellow addressed, thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets, as far as they would conveniently go, "and that ain't the worst of it—I dunno when we shall, for fish is so scarce outside that the old man cal'lates to haul the schooner up a spell till he gets our plowin' done; and worse yet," he continued, wrathfully, "he says I've got to

put in five or six weeks to town school that begins this mornin'."

"Is Cy Dobbs and the two Riley boys goin', do you know, Brisket?" inquired Rider, with an appearance of considerable interest, as he rose on his elbow and looked inquiringly up at the other.

"I heard Cy say *he* was goin'," was the reply. "Didn't think of tryin' a spell of schoolin' yourself, did you, Buck?"

"Well," returned Rider, shaking the ashes from his pipe, "I hadn't thought of it till jest now, but I'm kind of out of a job since the Beehive's burnt down, and as I haven't had no fun with a schoolmaster since we bounced that college chap last spring, I b'leve I'll look in on this new one a spell. If he goes to puttin' on airs, why, we'll jest show him that Burton ain't the place for city dudes, eh, Brisky?"

Brisket gave a delighted assent, whereupon the two began to make ready for their enterprise.

Half an hour later, Mr. Morris, with a few books under his arm and accompanied by Roy Cole, made his way to the small schoolhouse, where some twenty five or thirty scholars had assembled in front of the building.

"It's a shame that it's always just this way," Charley Clary was saying, as Roy and the teacher came up. "Mr. Morris," he continued quickly, "I wouldn't go in just now—there's three or four big fellows—Cy Dobbs and Buck Rider, and those who have come here this morning just to make trouble——"

"Ah!" said Mr. Morris, quietly, but with a slight compression of his lips; "I'm sorry to hear that."

And unheeding Clary's well meant advice, the young man stepped into the schoolroom, and, laying his books down on the nearest bench, took a rapid view of the situation.

Sitting astride of either end of the big old fashion

ed pine desk, hacked and scored by a generation of boyish jack knives, were Buck Rider and Cyrus Dobbs, the scapegrace son of Josiah Dobbs, Esq. He was a coarse, hulking fellow, and his presence in the schoolroom with Buck Rider was a sure foreboding of trouble. Brisket himself occupied the tall stool, and the trio were playing a game of cards known as "three handed euchre."

Mr. Morris laid aside his hat, buttoned his rather threadbare frock coat tightly about his well knit frame, smoothed down the fingers of a pair of snug fitting kid gloves, as though he were just getting ready for the street.

"Look at his kid gloves, *will* you?" observed Brisket. He spoke in a very audible undertone, possibly as much for the benefit of Mr. Morris as for his companions.

"Will you please get down and away from that desk?" said Mr. Morris, in a tone of ominous smoothness, broken by the slightest perceptible tremor, which his hearers unfortunately attributed to the wrong cause. He addressed the three in a general way, though his cool gray eyes were resting on the sneering face of Rider, who just then was ripe for mischief—or anything worse.

"Hold on till we play this hand out, mister. I pass, Cy," replied Rider, winking at the others.

Stepping rapidly forward, Morris snatched in quick succession the cards held by the trio, and, throwing them upon the pack lying upon the desk, swept up the whole in his hand and tossed them into the stove.

"They'll nigh about pound him to death, Roy," said Charley Clary, whose voice was trembling with excitement. "What say, shall we stand by him?" And Roy, who had already thrown off his coat, replied:

"Why, of course, but—hold on a bit, Charley!"

I do not propose to give a detailed description of the action of Mr. Edward Morris that had caused Roy's sudden stay of proceedings.

I would merely observe that Buck Rider, who, resenting the loss of his cards, had resolved himself into an attacking party, was not only repulsed, but with such unexpected vigor and science, that when he began to rally from the shock of defeat, he found himself on his back in the middle of one of the aisles, with his boot heels elevated above his head.

"*Get down!*" again said Mr. Morris, raising his voice a little, and glancing at his kid gloves, which were badly split across the knuckles. Cyrus Dobbs, being personally addressed, leisurely obeyed. Hitching up his trousers and moistening the palms of his hands, the young ruffian attempted to seize the school teacher round the waist, with the intention, as he told himself, of "fallin' on to him hefty." Dobbs, I may remark in passing, was the one who had so brutally kicked George Greyson in the side the year previous, as he was held down by Buck Rider in this same room. And the remembrance of this did not take anything from the force of the straight out blow that caught Cy Dobbs under the chin and precipitated him directly on top of Rider.

"Stand out of the way, young folks!" called Mr. Morris, sharply. And before unhappy Brisket realized what was about to happen to him, a pair of small but muscular hands had seized him by the collar and waistband and pitched him headforemost through the entry, just as Captain Prescott Bluster, warned by a breathless boy that a fight was in progress at the school house, had placed his foot on the threshold.

Brisket's bullet head collided with such force against the middle button on Captain Bluster's vest,

that the latter, with an ejaculation of dismay, doubled up like a half shut jack knife, and fell backward in a highly undignified manner.

Rider and his discomfited companion inside scrambled to their feet and made a mad rush at their assailant. Well, one scientific sparrer skilled in the art of self defense can considerably more than hold his own against two powerful but unskilled brutes. And before Captain Bluster had finished dusting off his clothes with his handkerchief, Buck Rider's vision was temporarily obscured by a puffiness beneath each eye, and he was stumbling through the school house doorway, followed by Cy Dobbs, with a red bandanna handkerchief pressed against his nose, and one hand applied to his lower jaw as though he had a severe face ache.

Mr. Edward Morris, slightly flushed and breathing much quicker than usual, appeared in the doorway, stripping the last remnants of the kid gloves from his fingers.

"Mr. Morris," exclaimed Captain Bluster, in an awful voice, as Brisket, rubbing his head very hard, dodged round the corner to avoid the ironical remarks of certain hilarious boys, "how—how *dare* you imbroil and—and—disintegrate the peacerble atmosphere of a schoolroom with a brawl that would disgrace the presinks of Donnybrook Fair?"

"I *think*," said the muscular young teacher, addressing Rider and young Dobbs before they could fairly beat a retreat, and ignoring Captain Bluster altogether, "I think, young men, that you've both got punished enough for now, though nothing to what you deserve, if only for your brutal treatment of the young man who tried to teach here last spring, and who happens to be a particular friend of mine."

For once Buck Rider was dumb. Only pausing to shake his fist in impotent rage, he hurried away, fol

lowed by Cy Dobbs, who also seemed to have suddenly lost the power of speech.

"I forbid you to op'n this school, sir, till you hear from the board of trustees," sputtered the captain.

Mr. Morris, with an exasperating smile, though secretly rather disturbed, said "very well," and the captain hurried down to Squire Dobbs's office, where an informal meeting of the "board" was hastily called.

Mr. Morris quietly walked back to Miss Cynthia Cole's. Here Roy had already preceded him, and having breathlessly recounted, for the benefit of his aunt and sister, the morning's experience, he ran up to his room to leave his book satchel, when, upon opening the room door, the scene which met his horrified gaze was of such a complicated and alarming nature that I must defer its description to the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

JERRY AND MR. SIMS.

I have not as yet mentioned the fourth member of Miss Cynthia Cole's household—Jerry, the tame crow. Miss Cynthia had brought Jerry up by hand, from a half starved fledgling picked up on Burton hill at the foot of a pine tree containing the parent nest, until he had grown into as knowing, strong, mischievous and affectionate a bird as ever plundered a single lady's work basket, or made inroads upon a pantry.

Nor have I spoken of Sims—or more properly "Mr." Sims, the pet aversion, not only of Jerry, but of Jerry's mistress, Miss Cynthia.

Captain Lewis had brought Mr. Sims home from foreign parts, and formally adopted him for a life long companion. Out of deference to the Coles' next door neighbor, Miss Cynthia's, plainness of speech, Mr. Sims was usually kept chained to a pillar on the captain's back veranda. From this state of bondage, however, he was perpetually freeing himself, when he invariably scrambled over the fence between the captain's little garden, and the one belonging to the Cole homestead, to seek out and exasperate Jerry the crow. Mr. Sims, my readers will have guessed, was a monkey.

Now on this eventful Monday, Jerry, the crow, had appeared to by no means share in the general feelings of depression. He had been busy since daylight in those mischievous pursuits in which his heart de-

lighted. As for example, catching and killing an unfortunate field mouse, which he carefully deposited on the front entry table, and hiding Miss Cynthia's silver thimble in the soap dish.

Then he sought fresh fields and pastures new on the upper floor. Finding the door to Roy's room slightly ajar, he at once walked in and halted in the middle of the floor with his head on one side, looking inquiringly about him.

The pretty pink lipped shells on the rug by the grate at once attracted Jerry's attention. He had never seen them before, not being allowed up stairs, and therefore he proceeded at once to investigate. Approaching the largest, Jerry cocked his head still further on one side, and seemed to be listening to the echo of the sad sea waves, though in reality his hard, round, unwinking eye had caught a tiny glimpse of something within the smooth orifice.

What could it be? Inserting his inquisitive beak, Jerry drew out a dingy silk handkerchief with a knot in one corner. Here was a prize, indeed; and holding an end of it in his strong bill, Jerry at once flew up on the sill of the open window, with a triumphant croak which at once changed to an emphatic guttural of disgust at the unexpected appearance of the hated Sims, who, having just escaped from his confinement, had at once betaken himself to his favorite resort.

It is almost needless to state that no sooner had Jerry's feet touched the window sill than Sims eagerly clutched the pendant silk handkerchief, which he attempted to pull out of the crow's beak, Jerry pulling back with all his strength.

And *this* was the unwelcome sight that met Roy Cole's gaze as he entered his chamber after having returned from the schoolhouse, as narrated in the conclusion of the last chapter.

Dropping his books, Roy rushed to the rescue; but it was too late. The strain on the flimsy silk was too great, and before Roy could reach the window it parted! With one half of it dangling from his bill, Jerry flew out of the window to the very top of the big elm before the house, while Mr. Sims rapidly compressing *his* half into a small round ball, tucked it hurriedly into his cheek pouch, and in another moment was scampering over the picket fence, back into Captain Lewis's garden.

Here, indeed, was a complication! The whole incident had happened so quickly that Roy could not tell, to save his life, whether Jerry, the crow, or Sims the monkey, held the corner of the handkerchief in which the diamond cross was knotted. One of them had it, but *which* one? That was the question; and in great trepidation Roy ran quickly down stairs. Reba was standing in the doorway, looking upward toward the top of the elm, her slim hand shading her eyes from the sun.

"What *has* Jerry got now, Roy? she asked, with a laugh, as the crow held the fragment of the handkerchief in his beak, and glanced knowingly down at them.

"If I had a loaded gun I'd show you," excitedly returned her brother, much to Reba's surprise, as Jerry and Roy were generally the best of friends.

Roy rapidly told Reba the whole story, which was not altogether unexpected, for his sister had had suspicions that something was wrong since his abrupt departure from the house the evening before.

"It won't do to lose a moment," she said promptly, as Roy concluded; "so while I run over to Captain Lewis's and hunt up Mr. Sims, you must see if you can't coax Jerry down with a bit of maple sugar, as you did when he took Aunt Cynthia's scissors up in the apple tree."

Throwing on her garden hat, Reba left Roy to carry out his own part of the programme, while she hurried round to Captain Lewis's.

The captain was a great favorite with the young people of Burton, no less for his genial disposition and general good heartedness, than for his unfailing supply of marvelous sea stories, no one of which he ever told twice alike.

As Reba approached, the bluff old sea dog removed his pipe from the corner of his mouth with his solitary hand, and waved it in token of greeting.

"Well, my bonny lass," he said, in his hearty voice, "how fares it this fine morning?"

Reba glanced inquiringly at the rail where Sims was wont to sun himself.

"Where is Mr. Sims, captain?" she asked.

"Mr. Sims," returned Captain Lewis, following the direction of her gaze, "has slipped his moorin's agin, an' the last I see of him was the tip end of his tail a vanishing over the picket fence 'twixt me 'n' your Aunt Cynthy's; did you want him for anything p'ticler?" inquired the captain.

"Why yes, captain," Reba answered with a smile; "Mr. Sims has run off with a piece of silk handkerchief that may have something valuable in it, so I want to talk with him a moment on the subject."

"Which you shall, directly he comes back, my little woman," replied the captain; "and if Mr. Sims don't let you know all, square and above board, what he's been up to, why——"

Without concluding his remark, Captain Lewis nodded his gray head significantly toward a small riding whip, with which he occasionally was given to correcting his erratic companion.

A rustling among the currant bushes was heard, and a small impish face peered out for a moment,

after which, as though reassured by the captain's composed features, Mr. Sims scampered across the walk, and reached his accustomed place on the rail at a bound.

Pulling him unceremoniously down on his knee, the captain carefully inspected the interior of Mr. Sims's somewhat roomy mouth. Nothing was to be found there.

"Oh dear," said Reba, in a disappointed tone, "he has dropped it somewhere I suppose. I can't tell you *why*, captain, but Roy and I have a reason for wanting that piece of handkerchief *very* much."

"I'm powerfully sorry, my lass," returned the captain, dismissing his pet with a gentle cuff, "but I 'spect that there never was a chap so full of inquisitiveness an' mischievousness as that there Mr. Sims. I lay it to the fact of his havin' once been a live idol in one o' them heathen temples up to Benares, in the East Ingys. How *I* happened to get holt of him," continued Captain Lewis, unconsciously drifting into familiar narrative, "was this: I——"

"Re—ba!"

The call was from Roy, and hastily excusing herself from remaining to hear the conclusion of the captain's story, Reba made her way back to her brother, casting hasty glances among the shrubs and bushes, with the vain hope of discovering the filched property.

Poor Roy stood at the foot of the elm tree, a picture of perplexity and despair, as his sister made known the result of her visit to Captain Lewis. He had induced Jerry to descend, it was true, but either by accident or designedly, the provoking bird had left the fragment hanging to one of the topmost branches.

"He went to work gobbling down the sugar,"

passionately explained Roy, "but the moment I threw off my coat and began to climb the tree, the old wretch knew what I was after. He waited till I got *almost* high enough, and then flew up, grabbed the bit of handkerchief, and struck a bee line for Burton Mountain!"

"And the trouble is," said Reba, "that neither of us can tell whether Jerry or Sims had the knotted end, though it seems to me more likely to have been Jerry, for——"

"It don't matter much now which it was," gloomily interrupted Roy, "for it isn't one chance in a thousand that we shall lay eyes on either piece again."

Jerry flew back toward the house near sundown, as he always did after his not infrequent flights to the mountain side, in some of the trees of which the parental nest had probably rested. He offered neither explanation nor apology for his absence, but it was quite noticeable that Jerry kept himself at a safe distance from Roy. "Lucky for you that you do," grimly muttered Roy, and Jerry, watching him sharply with his bright, black eyes, strutted about the front door patch in a most exasperating way, puffing out his glossy breast, and chuckling hoarsely to himself in a manner which implied that if he chose he could tell Roy Cole something which would interest him considerably.

CHAPTER XIII.

CON BADGER'S DISCOVERY.

Burton had never before known so exciting a week as that which had passed. There had been the event of the bicycle, the loss of a six thousand dollar cross and a fire; and the ensuing Monday had not only furnished a school house fracas, but while it was in progress, two sailing yachts had dropped anchor within a cable's length of Burton wharf.

Glancing with considerable interest at the new arrivals, Mr. Morris, in answer to an imperative summons from the "board" made his way leisurely toward Mr. Dobbs's office about the middle of the eventful Monday forenoon. Entering, he found the three members of the school committee awaiting him.

The conference was brief but to the point, and the fiat went forth that Mr. Morris was henceforth deposed from office.

He then returned to his boarding place. There he stepped out of the front door with the glass, to examine the two trim schooner yachts which I have mentioned as having arrived that morning.

"Mr. Morris, will you step here a moment, please?" called a slightly patronizing voice. Turning round, the young man saw Mrs. Stanhope sitting in her phaeton drawn up near the gate with Augustus at her side.

Stepping at once to the gate, Mr. Morris awaited the lady's commands.

"I am quite anxious," she said, with a fond glance at her stepson, "that my Augustus should keep up his French while out of school, as I think of making a European tour during the coming winter and shall wish him to accompany me. You are a French scholar, I presume?"

"A tolerably good one, madam," was the reply.

"We—I heard you were not to teach the town school as expected," Mrs. Stanhope went on, with a little hesitation, "and my object in calling was to say that there are quite a number of friends of mine among the yacht arrivals this morning, and if you would be willing to instruct a few scholars, including Augustus, at—well—a reduction from the regular rates, I think I could form a class for you."

It took but a minute to decide. A few moments' further conversation sufficed for a satisfactory arrangement as to terms.

Augustus, who had looked anything but pleased at the prospect of the future lessons, gathered up the reins just as a remarkably handsome young man, dressed in a semi nautical suit of navy blue, and wearing a naval cap with "Juno" in gold letters on the front, sprang lightly over the opposite fence.

"Mrs. Stanhope, I believe," he said, lifting his cap as he stepped to the side of the phaeton. The lady gave a little exclamation, caught her breath and turned quite pale; but quickly recovering herself, she said in an inquiring voice not free from a perceptible tremor:

"Excuse me—you have changed since I saw you—I think, if I am not mistaken, it is Mr. Hugh——"

"Penny, madam—the proverbial bad penny that always returns," was the reply in a half mocking voice; and with a curious expression on his dark, handsome face, Mr. Penny seemed to await an introduction to Augustus and Mr. Morris.

With a somewhat ill grace Mrs. Stanhope made the expected introductions. Mr. Penny frigidly acknowledged the slight inclination of Augustus's head, but genially expressed his pleasure at making the acquaintance of Mr. Morris.

"We should be pleased to have you call," said Mrs. Stanhope, with an evident effort; "Augustus and myself are boarding at Mrs.—but stop, you are a stranger here, perhaps I had better write down the direction." Producing a visiting card, Mrs. Stanhope hastily wrote a few words thereon and extended it to Mr. Penny, who formally bowed his thanks as Augustus drove on.

"I presume that you belong to one of the yachts, Mr. Penny?" said Morris. Mr. Penny was glancing at the card in his hand. With a curling lip he crushed the bit of pasteboard between his fingers, let it fall to the ground unconsciously, then turned his eyes toward the harbor.

"To the Juno, of which vessel I have the honor to be sailing master—the youngest one in the squadron, I believe," was the pleasant reply.

"You have met Mrs. Stanhope before?" suggested Morris, inquiringly, hoping, perhaps, to draw him out.

"I have," was the brief answer. "And now, Mr. Morris, with the hope that I may meet you again soon, I must bid you good day, for I see that our boat is pulling ashore."

Mr. Penny lifted his cap and walked away with the firm, upright carriage and elastic step that speaks of an active, energetic nature.

"A nice young fellow, I should say; but there's something quite peculiar in the whole matter," mused Morris, as he turned in at the gate. "I'd like to know——"

"Oh, Mr. Morris," gayly exclaimed Roy, who had

come swinging along the street, and, pausing a moment, had picked up the crumpled card at which he glanced, "here's a mysterious message from some one to some one else—wonder if that young fellow in brass and blue didn't drop it?"

Receiving the card extended him by Roy, the reverse side of which bore Mrs. Stanhope's name, though Roy had not noticed it, Mr. Morris read these words:

Tomorrow at 9 a. m., near the old vessel drawn up on the beach.

Mr. Morris made Roy some careless answer, as he followed him in, but when once alone in his own room, he puzzled over the matter considerably without arriving at anything like a satisfactory conclusion.

A week went by in which the summer visitants were gradually beginning to get settled in their several boarding places.

All this time Con Badger, of whom we have been obliged to lose sight for a while, had been trying unsuccessfully to find a couple of rooms for himself and Granny Badger.

With a very discouraged face Con was walking thoughtfully toward Captain Lewis's house as a sort of last resort. He had made two or three coasting voyages with the captain before the latter had hauled up his old schooner for good, and had met with nothing but uniform kindness from him, though Captain Lewis never hesitated to lecture him roundly as to the error of his ways.

Thus reflecting, Con entered the captain's front gate, where he discovered the owner himself, in a little back garden setting out tomato plants. Mr. Sims had taken advantage thereof to enter the open pantry window, where he was engaged with his head in a pitcher of molasses.

"Look here, cap'n," said Con; "what I've come for is a bit of advice regardin' a—a— friend of mine."

"Heave ahead, my lad, I'm listenin'," returned the captain, seating himself leisurely on the edge of the portico.

"Well, cap'n," began Con, desperately, "it's like this; this friend of mine is a chap somewhere about my age, that's been goin' wrong for quite a spell, and now he wants to do the square thing—and grow up to be decent like other folks, you know, captain."

"Aye, aye, lad! I know," said the captain, with an approving nod, "an' you jest tell this friend of yourn that's been runnin' dead afore the wind till he's nigh shipwreck in the shoals, to shove the helm hard down, haul short on the wind, an' beat back to the ship channel, no matter how hard it blows or how strong the tide sets agin him. He'll get back, Con," continued Captain Lewis, impressively, "on'y jest let him *stick to it*, blow high or blow low, for Him that's up aloft holds all sich in the holler of his hand, an' it's their own fault, mainly, if they drif' back."

"I understand, cap'n," said Con, feeling a lump in his throat that kept him from saying more just then; but after a moment or two he went on:

"Now there's one thing more. This friend of mine was soft enough to let one of his 'sociates make a reg'lar catspaw of him, till one day what does he do but steal somethin' very vallyble an' work it so my friend, who didn't want anything to do with it, was egged into havin' a hand in hidin' it away. Now somethin' happened so this vallyble got lost—buried up where there isn't one chance in ten thousand that it'll ever come to light; an' mind you, cap'n, all this time nobody *knows*—whatever two or three might suspec'—nobody knows that this feller and my friend had a hand in it. Now, cap'n," earnestly asked Con,

"what do you think—would it be any good to go—that is," hastily correcting himself, "for my friend to go to the one that owned the vallyble and tell the whole story?"

Captain Lewis lighted his pipe and smoked in silence for a little time.

"Well, Con," he finally replied, "mebbe I see the drift of this here little parable, mebbe I don't. My advice to you—that is," said the captain, checking himself hastily, "to your frien', would be to let things drift along as they be for a spell, an' see how they come out. You ain't found no chance for you'n the ol' lady yet, have you?" the captain asked, as Con nodded his approval of his advice.

"No," was the discouraged reply. "I don't care for myself, for I can sleep round anywhere a spell longer; but what I'm thinkin' of most is granny."

"This mornin'," continued the captain, slowly, "I had a yarn with Miss Cole. She seems to think mebbe it's best that Aunty Badger stays where she is a spell longer. You leave her to Miss Cole's a week or so, an' stop here along of me till dif'rent arrangements is made; there's plenty of grub in the locker an' a spare hammock to boot. An' now," said the captain, dismissing Con's outburst of thanks with a hasty motion of his solitary hand, "if you've a mind to take 'Dutchy' there, an' knock over two or three partridges up back there 'mongst Hardy's birch lot, I'll make as good a pie for supper as ever you tasted."

Con nodded without speaking, and taking down the captain's long, double gun (to which the mariner had given the name of "Dutchy" because it was of Belgium make), he dropped some loaded shells into his coat pocket and left the house, striking into a wood road leading from the highway up over the spruce and birch covered hills back of the village.

"Help! Help!"

The cry ringing through the wood caused Con to dash rapidly through the underbrush in the direction of the imploring call. Reaching a small open space, the cause of the outcry, which proceeded from Augustus Stanhope, was manifest.

Augustus, perched on the lower limb of a maple, was clinging with his left hand to a bough over his head, while his right, in which was the ash butt of a fishing rod, was actively employed in repelling the attack of a vicious looking animal, not unlike a smaller species of panther.

"A *lucife!*" exclaimed Con—the word being a corruption of *loup cervier*, an animal quite well known to the northern lumbermen for its ferocity when roused to attack. Leveling his gun, as the animal gathered itself for a rush, Con fired.

The shot, "clumping" together at short range, made a hole the size of an ounce ball through the heart of the animal, which fell to the ground, snarling and writhing in its death agony.

"That's the first time ever I killed a four legged critter on the wing," cried Con, exultantly.

"Is he dead?" fearfully called Augustus from the tree limb. Reassured by Con's cheerful laugh, Augustus slid down the trunk of the tree, at the base of which lay his fishing basket empty.

He had torn his elaborate sportsman's suit, bruised himself in various places, been chased and treed by the *lucife*, and was returning home without having caught a singe fish.

"Well, you *did* have rather hard luck," laughed Con. Then with the assistance of a tolerably sharp jack knife, he proceeded to skin the *lucife* in quite a scientific manner. "But if you want to go trouting some day, I'll take you to a place where you can fill your basket in no time."

But Augustus, looking rather disdainfully at the poorly clad young fellow who had made the good natured offer, said no, and, without going through the formality of thanking Con for coming to his assistance so opportunely, he took his departure.

"That's another of them folks that don't want to give any show to a poor fellow," muttered Con, discontentedly, as he washed his hands and knife in a mountain pool. He hung the skin on the limb of a hemlock, and took up his line of march again.

The season was rather too far advanced for the birch buds, of which partridges are so fond; but Con had succeeded in killing three among the thick spruces, when suddenly he put up a large covey, which scattered in various directions.

The last one whirred away almost from under his feet, and it rose in nearly a straight line to a considerable height. Con pitched his gun forward, and, aiming a trifle ahead, pulled the trigger. Almost simultaneous with the report the plump body of the partridge turned fairly over in air; but in falling it lodged among the limbs of a tall fir tree.

Throwing down the gun, and pulling off his coat, Con swung himself upward by a lower limb and ascended the tree like a squirrel. Curiously enough, the partridge had fallen almost directly into a clumsy circular structure half the size of a washtub, built of twigs and dry moss, which Con at once recognized as an old crow's nest. Tossing the body of the partridge carelessly to the ground, he was about descending, when his heart almost stopped beating!

For, caught between two crooked twigs near the top of the nest was a torn fragment of a dingy silk handkerchief with a knot in one corner, which he could have sworn was at that moment lying buried among the scattered bricks, motar and general *debris* in the cellar of the old Beehive!

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN BLUSTER'S TRIUMPH.

Scrambling down the tree with his prize clutched tightly in his hand, Con tore at the confining knot with trembling fingers, and the diamond cross in all its sparkling splendor appeared to his astonished and excited gaze!

"I don't understand it: seems as though there must be some sort of witchery about it," he exclaimed in the greatest bewilderment.

He wisely gave up trying to solve the problem, and turned his attention to the more immediate question —what should he do about it?

"If I should carry it right back to Mrs. Stanhope," he reflected, as he wrapped the cross again in the torn silk and placed it carefully in his pocket, "she wouldn't believe me when I told her where I found it, and likely enough would have me 'rested on account of Buck and me bein' 'spected at the first. If I send it to her unbeknown, I won't get any reward, and I do need some money, that's a fact.

"I might ask Cap'n Lewis what's best to do, only, somehow, seems as though I'd rather have the 'pinion of a man that knowed a little more about the world on any such matter as this. Now there's Captain Bluster—he's a reg'lar business man," continued Con in his musing, "but he isn't no ways honest, and——"

Captain Bluster! All at once it occurred to Con

that he had in his keeping a secret which, if known to the community at large, would cover the captain with shame and disgrace.

"Why couldn't I borrow some money to help Granny and I along a spell of him?" said Con, stopping short. "He'd be willin' to pay, I guess, to have me keep what I know to myself; and as long's I've started to act on the square, I'd pay it back to him some time, if I had to live on one meal of vittels a day. Why didn't I think of it before?"

That there was anything dishonorable, either in the means he had employed to obtain the captain's secret or his plan of getting money from Captain Bluster through the possession of it, Con's moral perceptions were not sufficiently awakened to detect.

Taking the *lucife* skin on his way back, Con hurried villageward through the twilight, leaving his gun and game in Captain Lewis's kitchen; and having tidied himself up, he turned his steps in the direction of the Burton Hotel.

The recent influx of summer visitors had filled the small hotel to overflowing. Con made his way through the groups of gentlemen collected on the wide piazza, and to the office, where he inquired of Mr. Merrill, the proprietor, if Captain Bluster was in his room.

"Yes," said Mr. Merrill, rather shortly, as he looked up at the querist; "but he's engaged with—no, they're coming down now—it's room eleven."

At the sound of descending feet on the hall stairs, Con looked up, to be humorously recognized by an almost imperceptible wink from Tom Scott and a nod from Lewis Reece.

Accompanying the two was a third, whom Con remembered to have seen at different times idling about the village.

It immediately occurred to Con that this mig'ıt be the detective that he had heard Reece and Scott speak of the night he overheard their interview with Captain Bluster.

As he stopped a moment at the head of the stairs, he heard one of them telling Mr. Merrill to have a four seated carriage and driver ready to take himself, his two companions and Captain Bluster to Burton Center early enough on the following morning to catch the 7:30 through express to Boston.

Knocking at the door of number eleven, Con was bidden by a very gruff voice to "come in."

Captain Bluster had by no means the appearance of a man who was in the mood to grant a favor.

"Well, what do *you* want?" he growled, as his visitor sat down with exasperating coolness.

Con plunged at once into the business at hand.

"Look here, Captain Bluster," said Con, abruptly, "I'd like to borrow fifty or seventy five dollars for a year—may be longer, but a year, certain."

Captain Bluster's large mouth opened to an abnormal extent. and he rubbed his eyes, as though to rid himself of some unpleasant optical illusion.

"That's a nice looking picture, cap'n," continued Con, pointing to a painting on the opposite wall representing a ship under full sail. "That ain't the vessel you was cap'n of when you cut the boat adrift with them two men that just went down stairs in it and got the money they left aboard in your care—is is?"

"So, then, they've told you the whole story," exclaimed the captain, grinding his teeth; "the lyin' scoundrels!"

"They didn't tell me anything," replied Con, glancing rather uneasily toward the door. "I was in the other room while the three of you were talkin', and heard it all."

"Oh, you did, eh?" said Captain Bluster, in a tone full of savage import.

The speaker's voice and manner were full of malignity. Starting to his feet, he stepped to the door and locked it. Con's courage for the moment forsook him. Big drops of perspiration began to form on his forehead. Forgetful in his agitation of the contents of the bit of silk handkerchief in his pocket, he drew it out hastily to wipe away the perspiration, when, to his horror and dismay, the diamond cross fell from its folds almost at the feet of the captain.

"Aha!" exclaimed the captain, as he pounced upon the glittering ornament with greedy eagerness. Con's heart sank like lead, as a faint realization of the tremendously awkward position his unfortunate act had placed him in began to dawn upon his mind.

"Here, that's mine, Cap'n Bluster," he exclaimed; "at least, I found it while I was off gunning."

"Oh, yes, you found it, of course! Probably Mr. Kasner would believe a story of that kind," was the ironical reply. After gloating over the gems a moment, Captain Bluster very coolly locked the brooch in a drawer of a small safe in the corner of the room. "The fact is," continued the captain, with an unpleasant smile, "that taking your general rep'tation and the fact that you'n' the Rider chap was as good as known to have had somethin' to do with the loss, I rather think I've got you in a tight place, my lis'enin' young friend." And it sadly occurred to Con that he had.

"Now, Badger," continued the captain, "you see I've got you right square under my thumb. I could have you arrested this very minute for larceny. But though you've tried to get the better of me, I don't want to be too hard on you. I've been ponderatin' of it over, and now I've got a proposition to make. Only you must take a reg'lar Bible oath not to tell what I'm goin' to propose."

"Well, where's the book?" responded Con.

After considerable search, Captain Bluster brought out an old volume of Wesley's sermons as the nearest approach to a copy of the Scriptures which the room contained, and, having hastily sworn Con, made known his proposition, which in substance was as follows:

Having business in Boston on the following day, he would take the cross with him and submit it to some reliable diamond broker. If he found that it was of the value put upon it by Mrs. Stanhope, he would on his return enter into negotiations with the lady, upon the understanding that on the payment of the offered reward the cross was to be returned without any questions being asked.

Of the reward Captain Bluster said he should retain one half for his services as "go between"—Con to receive the other half on condition that he solemnly agreed to keep the captain's secret regarding both the transaction itself and the one in which Reece and Tom Scott were involved.

Con turned the matter over in his mind, but could see no other way out of it.

"Well," he said, rising to his feet, "I'll agree, but I want you to remember one thing—this exposing bizness is a game that two can play at. Deal square with me and I will with you. Only mind you, Cap'n Bluster, that if you *do* try any game on me, I'll tell that little story of yours from one end of Burton to the other;" and without waiting for the captain's answer Con left the room.

CHAPTER XV.

A GOOD DAY'S WORK FOR CON.

EARLY the next morning, Mrs. Stanhope left her apartments at the Widow Smith's and sallied out for a walk.

She turned her steps along a wood path which led through a grove of beech and maple, and descended gradually toward the curving beach. Close by the shore end of the path, a narrow but deep creek mingled its waters with those of a wide brawling brook. The creek itself was overhung with a growth of gnarled white oaks, to the trunk of two of which was moored Captain Lewis's former coasting vessel—a small schooner of forty or fifty tons, from which the masts and rigging had been removed.

Reaching the edge of the shore, Mrs. Stanhope seated herself on an upturned dory near the mouth of the creek, quite near the moored vessel, and drawing a light veil over her face, raised a parasol.

She had not long to wait. Mr. Hugh Penny, passing the little knots of beach pedestrians, walked directly up from the water's edge, and lifted his cap with grave courtesy.

The lady wasted no time in conventionalities.

"Now, Hugh," she said, with something like sharpness in her usually even tones, "I wish, first of all, that you will explain your object in following me to this out of the way village."

"Following you!" echoed the young man, with a

slight shrug of his shoulders. "Till I met you yesterday morning, Mrs. Stanhope, I presumed that as usual you were at Saratoga or Long Branch. One thing I learned, however, from an item in a recent paper, which was to the effect that the wealthy Mrs. Stanhope had recently lost a valuable diamond cross —*supposed*—ahem!—to have once been worn by the Empress Eugenie, and bought at a private sale of some of the empress's jewels in Paris, by John Stanhope, the banker."

"It was that newspaper item—not mere chance that brought you here, Hugh Penny!" exclaimed Mrs. Stanhope, with an angry ring in her voice.

"I said once that I did not dream of meeting you here, madam," was the cool reply; "and I was never yet credited with telling an untruth. I leave that for those better versed in the ways of deceit," he added, with a peculiar emphasis that brought a wave of color to Mrs. Stanhope's cheeks.

"Do you—need money?" she asked, with visible effort, after an awkward silence.

"Thanks, no," replied Hugh Penny, with a slight smile. "I earn far more than I need for my simple wants. I see your drift, madam," he continued, "but you need have no fear that any word or act of mine while I may happen to remain in Burton will cause you the slightest uneasiness, or that in any way I shall ever again make the slightest claim upon you. As I hear voices quite near, and all that is needful has perhaps been said on both sides, I will bid you good morning."

The young man turned and walked rapidly away, just as Mr. Morris, accompanied by Roy and Reba Cole, came down the pathway toward the shore.

That morning, Mr. Morris had told Miss Cynthia of Mrs. Stanhope's proposition, and, having obtained her willing consent to allow Roy and Reba to join

the class when formed, he had insisted upon paying his board a few weeks in advance. To escape Miss Cynthia's thanks and protestations, he had gladly accepted an invitation from Roy and Reba to accompany them to the beach.

Mrs. Stanhope dropped her veil and retraced her steps, not unnoticed by Mr. Morris, who glanced from her receding form to that of Mr. Hugh Penny standing near a small landing stage.

"I wonder which one of them is the Juno," remarked Roy, who was calling his sister's attention to the two handsome yachts lying at anchor inside the breakwater.

"You will see directly." answered Mr. Morris, as he saw Hugh Penny putting a boatswain's whistle to his lips. A shrill note echoed over the water, and in the same moment three active young fellows in yachting rig manned a light boat, riding at the swinging boom of the nearer of the two yachts, and soon reached the landing stage, from which Mr. Penny was quickly transferred to the Juno's deck.

"There's Con Badger going to try for bluefish, Reba," said Roy, as the sturdy youth appeared, making his way along the barrier wall of the breakwater to its farthest extremity; and as Mr. Morris, who had his bathing suit under his arm, bent his steps in the direction of the bathing sheds, Roy and Reba strolled onward in the direction taken by Con Badger, coming up with him as he was getting his "gear" in readiness for operation.

"Hallo, Con," exclaimed Roy, with easy good nature; "isn't it a bit early for bluefish?"

"Why, yes," replied Con, whose thin face glowed with pleasure, no less at the friendly address than the bright smile of recognition accorded him by Reba; "but the folks at the hotel are getting kind of tired of cod an' haddock so steady, and as Buck

Rider's been livin' aboard my boat since the Beehive was burned, and takes her without leave or license to carry folks round the islands, and I can't so much as get sight of her hardly, I thought I'd try what I could do fishin' from the rocks here. I've got a notion that I can make a fair summer's work supplyin' the hotel and boardin' places with fish, p'ticularly if I can once get hold of the Wild Rover again. Buck Rider will have to get a boat for himself; he's used mine quite long enough,"

"Why, it looks as though you and Rider were going to dissolve partnership, Con," remarked Roy.

"We've dissolved as far's I'm concerned," responded Con, in a low voice. "And you can tell Miss Cynthy that I guess her hard talk didn't do me any harm, seeing that I've about made up my mind since then to—to—turn over a new leaf."

The last words came out with quite an effort, but as Con looked up rather shamefacedly, there was that in his plain but by no means unintelligent features which showed a certain firmness of purpose not easily overcome.

"I'm so glad, Con!" exclaimed Reba, and the words were echoed by Roy. After a short pause, Con continued:

"I earned a dollar by driving Mr. Merrill's team over to the Center, early this morning, with four gentlemen—that is, with three gentlemen and Captain Bluster. And now, if I only have luck, may be I'll double it before night."

While thus saying, Con had affixed to the end of his line a long, oval piece of pewter, sand papered perfectly bright, in one end of which was a large hook, with a bit of dried eel skin drawn over the curve of the shank. Taking the slack line some two feet from the hook between his thumb and forefinger, Con swung the glittering decoy, or "spoon," once,

twice, thrice about his head and sent it spinning far out beyond the breaking surf.

Eagerly watched by Roy and Reba, Con began almost immediately to draw the line back, hand over hand, keeping the spoon "skittering" in constant motion as near as possible to the surface of the waves.

"Nothin' this time," said Con, skillfully recovering his lead. Coiling the line down anew, he essayed a second and third trial with the same result.

"Once more, and if nothin' comes of it, I shall think it's too early for 'blues,' else the water's too cold." Impelled by his strong arm, the bright pewter went whizzing out over the creamy wave tops, striking midway between two rollers, where the water was just tinged with a shimmer of silver. Suddenly the line taughtened like a bow string.

"Struck one *sure!*" exclaimed Con, triumphantly. He wheeled sharply round, jerked the line on his shoulder and started along the rocky ridge at a sharp trot, with his face landward, while the fish at the end of the line in vain tugged and jerked and lashed the water.

Drawing the bluefish skillfully ashore, Con unhooked and tossed it into his basket, declaring it to be a six pounder at least. In five successive casts over the same school he succeeded, to the great delight of his companions, in taking four very fair sized fish.

Suddenly Reba, who had turned her gaze for a moment in another direction, uttered a sharp cry.

"Roy, Roy!" she exclaimed; "isn't that Mr. Morris swimming yonder? What is he waving his arm and hand for?"

Con Badger knew. Once before he had seen a swimmer attacked by cramp turn suddenly in the water and throw out the benumbed limbs in the

same manner, to start, if possible, the chilled blood into circulation, as well as call attention to his danger.

Down dropped the leaded hook and line—off came coat, vest and hat—away flew his shoes!

"Hail that nighest yacht, Roy—tell 'em to send out a boat," Con called, excitedly, even while swiftly measuring with his eye the distance he would have to jump, in order to clear the jagged rocks showing through the smother of foam. Then, making a short, quick run, he projected himself, head foremost, through the air and disappeared at the base of a big "comber." In an instant he rose in the comparatively smooth sea beyond, and struck steadily out for Morris, who was floating on his back a cable's length distant.

"Yacht ahoy!" yelled Roy, through his hands, placed funnel shape, at his mouth. "Send—off—a—boat—man—drowning!" indicating by frantic gestures the direction to be taken.

Hardly had the echo of his voice died away, when rapid orders were given in quick, authoritative tones on boad the Juno. In ten seconds or less, a sharp nosed, four oared boat, with Hugh Penny at the stern, was speeding towards the half drowning man and his approaching rescuer.

But would the boat reach them in time to save both? All at once the drowning man completely lost his head, he seized Con Badger in a frenzied clutch, and both disappeared together.

"Ease rowing—in oars!" and four eager pairs of hands grasped at the two as they were about going under for the third and last time. By united strength they were hauled over the boat's gunwale.

Con, though terribly blown, soon regained his breath, but Mr. Morris was insensible. Turning him face downwards, so that the water could escape

from his throat, Mr. Penny motioned his men to reship their oars.

"Give way, lads!" and the light boat fairly flew through the water. Reaching the side of the yacht, willing hands received Morris's half insensible form.

Half an hour later he came on deck rather pale, and a trifle shaky in the knees, but otherwise little the worse for his narrow escape.

To his disappointment, Con, in a dry suit, had insisted upon being set ashore, saying that he must get the bluefish he had caught up to the hotel, so that Mr. Merrill could have them for dinner. "And it's been such a lucky day so far, may be I can get another job," he said, soberly, to Mr. Penny, who had praised his courage in no measured terms, though Con insisted that what he did wouldn't have amounted to anything if the Juno's boat had not come to their joint rescue.

Having duly acknowledged his own obligation to the young sailing master and his boat's crew, Mr. Morris began looking about him with considerable interest.

The narrow deck planks were smoothed and oiled till they were almost like a ball room floor; the unpainted bulwarks and stanchions had been scraped and varnished to the smoothness of glass; the neat coils of rigging and running gear hung in systematical styles from the burnished pins; the brass work shone with repeated polishing—in short, everything bespoke the most painstaking care and judgment.

"Boat alongside, sir," said one of the men. Hugh Penny stepped quickly to the rail, followed by Mr. Morris.

Con Badger's lucky star was surely in the ascendant, for he had secured another job. Sitting in the sloping stern of Captain Lewis's thirteen foot dory,

which Con was preparing to back up to the side ladder, was a rather stout gentleman, whose head and shoulders were hidden from view by the large linen umbrella that he held in his hand.

"No, boy," he was saying to Con, with what seemed to be decidedly unnecessary vehemence, "I will *not* pay twenty five cents for being rowed a few rods in a leaky, dirty—er—dugout like this!"

"Sorry to hear it, guvnor," gravely returned Con, favoring one of the half dozen men, who were looking over the rail for'ard, with an almost imperceptible wink; "but you see, sir, since so many visitors has taken to comin' here, there's a reg'lar tariff of rates for boatin', and it wouldn't be no ways honest to cut under the other fellers." And gravely shaking his head, Con slowly impelled the dory from the yacht's side, to the loud spoken indignation of his choleric passenger.

"It's Mr. Granville himself," gleefully whispered Hugh Penny in the ear of Morris, without noticing the start and following look of blank astonishment, not unmixed with perplexity, that appeared on the latter's face as he heard the name. Drawing back a little from the rail, he listened with quiet amusement as the irate gentleman continued:

"I say that twenty cents is enough, and order you to put me on board at once—do you hear me? *At once!*"

"Tell you what I'll do," returned Con, with a perfectly unmoved visage, as he held the dory stationary with his oars, "seeing that you look tolerably honest, and may be haven't got over twenty cents, I'll trust you for the extra nickel till you can hear from the owner."

"From the owner?" wrathfully repeated Mr. Granville, closing the umbrella with a sharp snap, and disclosing the features of an elderly gentleman,

with iron gray hair and whiskers, and thin, sallow features. "What do you mean, young saucebox? I wish you to understand that *I* am the owner!"

"That so?" asked Con, innocently. "Why, I thought all the time you was the skipper."

"Skipper of *what?*" asked Mr. Granville, banging the ferule of the umbrella violently on the dory's bottom boards.

"Of this fancy lookin' little mack'ril catcher, of course. Does she hail from Glo'ster or Cape Ann, sir?" was the imperturbable answer. It proved too much for Mr. Granville's patience. To hear his thirty thousand dollar yacht designated as a "mackerel catcher" irritated him beyond forbearance, and he so far forgot his dignity as to rise in the boat and shake his umbrella threateningly at Con.

"Now look at your shoe, sir," said the lad with mild reproach, as Mr. Granville stepped one foot in some discolored water in the dory's bottom. Mr. Granville's short lived irritability was not proof against Con's coolness. He subsided into his seat, and drew the disputed coin from his pocket.

"There, there! No more nonsense — put me aboard," he said, with a slight twitch of the corners of his mouth; and, having received his fare, Con backed the boat into position. As Mr. Granville stepped on board, Mr. Morris signed to Hugh Penny not to call the gentleman's attention to his own presence. He dropped quickly into Mr. Granville's vacant seat in the dory's stern, and was rowed toward the wharf.

"Con," said Mr. Morris, gently, "I'm a very poor hand at expressing my thanks, but I want you to understand that I shall never forget your brave act, any more than I shall my own crazy cowardice that came so near drowning us both. Remember," he

went on, as Con, blushing furiously, was about to stammer something, he hardly knew what—"that if I can help you in any way—particularly in the new start in life, which I hear you have begun in earnest —I'll do it with all my heart. And now——"

"No, sir—none of *that*," interrupted Con, with so much emphasis that Morris's hand, which was reaching inside his coat for his pocketbook, was involuntarily withdrawn. "This brand new fit out of clo'es, even to shoes and a cap, that Mr. Penny gave me, is pay enough for all I did, and more, too. You're as welcome as the flowers in May, sir. It's better'n money to have a gentleman like you speak the way you have just now to a feller like me, that's tryin' to turn over a new leaf, and—be decent—like other folks."

In the fullness of his heart, Con was almost on the point of confiding the story of the diamond cross to Mr. Morris and asking his advice. But suddenly remembering, and for the first time regretting his sworn promise to Captain Bluster, he checked the impulse, and the dory having by this time reached the wharf, which was thronged with persons attracted by the news of Mr. Morris's narrow escape from drowning, there was no time for further conversation. Leaving Con to make the boat fast, and answer the eager questioning of inquisitive idlers, Mr. Morris made his way back to Miss Cynthia Cole's.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SUDDEN DISASTER.

"WHY! What has happened?" exclaimed Mr. Morris, apprehensively, hearing the sound of troubled voices in the little sitting room. He entered without knocking, to find Miss Cynthia rocking to and fro on the old fashioned sofa, her face the picture of despair, while Reba was kneeling beside her aunt trying to soothe her, and Roy stood staring vacantly out of the window in gloomy silence.

"Oh, dear, Mr. Morris!" cried Aunt Cynthia; "you've come to a house of mournin', and you jest rescued, as it were, from the jaws of death, an' not a drop of cherry bounce, or revivifyin' cordial of no kind in the house, an' I'm so flustrated I can't—Roy——" breaking out suddenly in the opening address—"get that letter, an' let Mr. Morris read it—it *can't* be true that after all my toilin' an' slavin' we're all ruined and lef' to go to the poorhouse, without so much as hardly money enough to pay for a decent funeral for the three of us!"

Fortunately Miss Cynthia's breath failed her at this gloomy point in her lamentations. Taking advantage of this, Mr. Morris read aloud the letter, which was handed him by Roy. The contents were as follows:

BOSTON, ——.

TO MISS CYNTHIA COLE:

RESPECTED MADAM,—Am sorry to have to inform you that Sharp & Shufel, Real Estate and Brokerage, have gone under. Sharp is supposed to be in Canada. Shufel committed suicide last night. Liabilities about $100,000. Assets nil. I fear the

$6,000 or thereabouts which you placed with them in your capacity as guardian for your brother's heirs, are a total loss. Regret that it was through my advice money was thus placed, but the firm has always been rated A1 at the Mercantile Agency, and credit supposed to be undoubted. I myself lose $1,500 by them.

Resp'y,

J. O. Masser, Att'y.

Mr. Morris laid the letter on the table with a troubled face. "Mind you, it ain't for myself I'm frettin'," said Miss Cynthia, before he could speak; "it's to think that through me this dretful calamity has come on these two children."

"Look here, Aunt Cynthia," interrupted Roy, "you've nothing to reproach yourself with, goodness knows. Here I am over fifteen years old, strong, healthy, and willing to work, and it's high time I was doing something to support you and Reba, instead of letting everything fall on your shoulders, for sis and I aren't very likely to forget who it is that has been father and mother to us all these years——"

And here Roy's voice faltered, and he left the room abruptly.

"I think, Mr. Morris," said Reba, raising her dark eyes, "that if it would not trouble you too much, Aunt Cynthia would be glad to have you advise her—we have no one to ask about business matters."

"I should be only too glad," answered Mr. Morris, warmly; and as Miss Cole gradually recovered her usual frame of mind, she was able to give him a tolerably clear idea of the situation.

They had about three hundred dollars in ready money, and there were no outstanding debts. The garden and hay fields were worked on shares—the one supplying the table with vegetables, and from the other hay enough was cut for the winter "keep" of their one cow, besides what was sold in haying time. There were a couple of plump porkers in the sty, poultry in the barn, and fish in the sea for the

catching. No, there was no danger of starvation, neither would the poorhouse doors need to be opened for them, despite Miss Cynthia's gloomy prophecy.

"But the old homestead 'll have to go now," said Miss Cynthia, with a heavy sigh, "an' we'd always reckoned on keepin' of it in the family. Including the house lot itself, the medder slope that runs up back of the house, and the timber lot, there's somewheres about forty five acres, an' in good times Cap'n Cole estimated the whole to be wuth pretty nigh five thousand dollars. Cap'n Bluster had the imperdence to offer eighteen hunders for it all one day last week," said Miss Cynthia, sharply, "and because I give him a short piece of my mind, he up and tol' me to my face that there was some kind of a flaw in the fam'ly title, an' we'd be turned out neck 'n' heels in a year or so if he said the word."

"Twenty years' undisturbed possession of property in this State gives a legal title," responded Morris, smilingly, "so I don't think his threats need give you the slightest uneasiness. As for selling the property," he continued, thoughtfully, "let the matter rest where it is awhile; I've got an idea in my head that I think may be worth considering before very long, and one that I will talk over again in due time." Waving aside Miss Cynthia's grateful protestations and Reba's timidly expressed thanks, the young man retired to his room, where, after some little thought, he penned the following epistle:

To Mr. Penny:

I return with most sincere thanks the change of clothing so kindly loaned, and also grateful acknowledgments for your courtesy and attention, which perhaps some day I can reciprocate. And now I have one more favor to ask, the reasons for which I will explain to you before very long. I am anxious to attend the dinner party on board the Juno to morrow, and probably shall come uninvited in defiance of the usages of polite society. Should you see me, I may ask you to give me one or two necessary introductions. Respectfully,

Edward Morris.

Effecting a change of clothing, Mr. Morris hailed a passing boy, and sent him off aboard the Juno with note and package.

"Well," said the young man, half aloud, pulling a chair to the open window and glancing with delight out over the sea expanse, "happenings have followed so closely at each other's heels since I came to Burton nearly a fortnight ago, that actually I have hardly had time for anything like serious reflection."

> "Which ever way the wind doth blow,
> Some heart is glad to have it so;
> Then blow it east, or blow it west,
> The wind that blows—that wind is best."

"Good heavens! what a charming voice that girl has; I wonder if she knows it?" he exclaimed, as in a pure, sweet contralto Reba in her room overhead, all unconscious of a listener, sang the words I have quoted—words which she had clipped from some paper, and set to music of her own untaught fancy.

The afternoon itself was conducive to idle reverie. There was a sort of dreamy languor in the breath of the south wind, which gently swayed the muslin curtains at his windows and toyed with the lock of dark hair that had an awkward trick of falling over the young collegian's broad forehead.

As Morris closed his eyes, something, perhaps the monotone of the surf breaking below on the beach, sent his thoughts drifting back from his present surroundings in the direction of his own home.

An only son, Mr. Morris had lost his mother at an early age, and had been sent to college by his father a couple of years before, greatly to the indignation of his mother's brother, who earlier in life had been a shipmaster.

"Uncle Peter," as he was invariably spoken of, settled down a very wealthy man in New York, where his life proved anything but happy. For his boy

Clarence, an only son and motherless, like Morris himself, "went to the bad," so it was whispered, and eventually disappeared from society. There were vague rumors that he had died at sea, but no one seemed to know the truth of the matter. Uncle Peter would never allow his name to be mentioned in his hearing.

It was after this that Edward's uncle wrote to Mr. Morris, senior, offering to adopt the boy he never had seen, and make him the heir to his wealth, amounting to something over a million, on conditions that he would take his name, and hold no further communication with Morris, senior, with whom he had had a foolish quarrel when their mutual business was finally adjusted years before.

"And wasn't he angry, though, when both father and myself answered, respectfully declining his offer," mused Mr. Morris, breaking into a little laugh.

"And to think," thus continued the current of the young man's reflections, "that after all these years I should have drifted to this little out of the way place to be rescued from drowning by a boat from Uncle Peter Granville's yacht, and even see him face to face, though, as I was only a boy when he saw me last, it isn't so very surprising that my respected uncle did not recognize his nephew. 'The plot thickens,' as they say in plays, and now if I can only carry out the little plan I have in mind successfully, I think I see a way to help Miss Cynthia out of her troubles.'

Thus saying, Mr. Morris began arranging his books and making his room otherwise presentable, for Mrs. Stanhope, who had succeeded in getting together four or five young ladies, had sent word that they might be expected that evening for their initial gathering.

CHAPTER XVII.

ROY'S NEW POSITION.

When Roy left his Aunt Cynthia's house, he had a half defined purpose in his mind, which strengthened with every step he took along the street in the direction of the Burton Hotel. He made his way to the office, where he succeeded in finding Mr. Merrill temporarily disengaged, and to him he made known his errand.

"Why, yes, I've advertised for a night clerk to help Potter out," said Mr. Merrill, glancing at a bewildered looking young man, who was checking off the arrivals. "But, Roy, what I want is some experienced man."

"I can learn, Mr. Merrill," returned Roy, resolutely; "and somehow I think I've got an aptitude for just such work as this. I write a fair hand, have a good memory, and—and you might try me, sir, a week or two, and if I don't suit, I won't ask any pay."

Mr. Merrill glanced at Roy's pleasant, open countenance; remembered his local reputation for honesty and uprightness, reflected that if Roy proved a success in his new vocation, he could probably be engaged for much less than an experienced man from the city, and, after consulting with his wife in another room, finally agreed to take him on trial—services to commence on the following morning.

Roy went home jubilant to communicate the news of his good fortune to his sister and aunt. Reba was

in Mr. Morris's room with five other young ladies, chaperoned by Mrs. Stanhope, the lady having decided upon that very evening for the first assembling of the newly formed class.

Miss Cynthia, who was washing the tea things in the kitchen, dropped her towel in dismayed amazement at her nephew's announcement, and it required all his powers of persuasion to reconcile her to his new enterprise.

But Miss Cynthia's good common sense prevailed over her pride; and then, too, Mr. Merrill and his wife she knew to be worthy, hard working people, while the hotel itself was kept on strictly temperance principles, and the associations, on the whole, would be better than those Roy might find elsewhere in Burton; while, as to allowing him to seek for employment amid the temptations of a city, that Miss Cynthia would not listen to for a moment.

"Con Badger's been here this morning to see his granny," remarked Miss Cynthia, after a little more conversation; "an' I must say, whether it was through me a talkin' so plain to him, or because there's some nateral good in the boy, sence he shook off that Rider feller, I never see sech a change in anybody in so short a time in my life. 'I'm stoppin' with Cap'n Lewis, Miss Cynthy,' he says, an' then, with kind of a mysterious look, he went on to tell how he expected, before long, to have money enough so's to keep Aunty Badger comf'tabler than they'd ever been before. You don't s'pose, Roy," continued Miss Cynthia, dropping her voice, "that he has got that dimun cross hid away somewhere, an' is only kind of makin' believe turn over a new leaf to blind folks, do you?"

"No I do *not*," replied Roy, feeling cold and hot by turns. "In fact I know it isn't so—Con has gone to work in good earnest and he's on the lookout for a job of any kind from morning till night."

"Well, I'm glad of it," was the hearty reply. "Do you know, Roy," continued Miss Cynthia, with a mysterious air after a little, "that it's my private opinion that Con's father was a gentleman—for you know, of course, that Con ain't neither kith nor kin to Aunty Badger, an' only calls her 'granny' as a kind of pet name—she havin' brought him up sence he was a little slip of a boy."

Roy, who secretly would rather have talked of his own agreeable prospects just then, suppressed a yawn and said he believed he'd heard something of the kind.

"Aunty Badger's got a book, Roy," said his aunt, impressively—"a little pockit Shakespeare that must a' been bound splendid when it was new—that Con's own mother give her when the pore thing was a dyin' with her head in Mrs. Badger's lap, an' inside the cover there's the names of her and her husban' an'——"

But the opening of the door, admitting Reba and the merry class of young girls who had come to see the interior of an old time kitchen, cut short Miss Cynthia's confidences and afforded bashful Roy an opportunity to escape.

While in the seclusion of his own chamber Roy is overhauling his rather limited stock of clothing, and laying the same in his trunk for transportation on the morrow to his new quarters, let us for a short time follow the footsteps of Captain Prescott Bluster, who, with the valuable ornament securely tucked away in an inside pocket, was sitting absorbed in deep thought in the smoking room of a small but select Boston hotel over the main entrance of which is inscribed in large letters:

"BRUNTON'S

"For gentlemen only. Open all night."

Captain Bluster had for many years made Brun-

ton's his headquarters during his not infrequent visits to the city, and being tolerably well known to the proprietor and clerks, had no difficulty whatever in obtaining a comfortable room for himself, together with a double bedded apartment immediately adjoining for Mr. Reece and Tom Scott, who showed their fondness for his society by almost insisting upon accompanying him to the hotel in question in preference to any other.

"I'll be with you by banking hours in the morning," remarked quiet spoken, dark complexioned Mr. Green, who had accompanied the party from Burton. "Good night, gentlemen—good night, Captain Bluster."

Messrs. Reece and Scott echoed the good night heartily as they walked away, leaving Captain Bluster to his own gloomy thoughts.

Look in whichever direction he might, Captain Bluster could see no way out of his embarrassment. On the journey thither he had been allowed to examine some additional written evidence, which convinced him that between the two evils of occupying a felon's cell or suffering himself to be despoiled of his ill gotten gains, it was advisable to choose the latter.

"To think," savagely reflected Captain Bluster, biting viciously at the end of his unlighted cigar, "that after all the pains I took to cover up my tracks and hide my talons, as it were, underneath a bushel basket in a little corner down East, that sneakin' detractive should have hunted me out——"

"Note for you, sir," said one of the porters, touching him on the shoulder. "Messenger boy said 'no answer.'"

Tearing open the epistle with eager fingers, Captain Bluster read as follows:

"Just heard you were in town. If you can buy the place—

Cole homestead, I think you called it—we have been corresponding about for two thou' or even twenty five hundred, do so, and wire me at once. Responsible parties will join with us in the hotel project. Act promptly. Destroy this letter.

"LODER."

"There must be plenty of money in it, else Loder wouldn't be so hot after it," reflected Captain Bluster, as he tore the letter into small bits and dropped them under his chair.

"Twenty five thousan' dollars to once to be drawed out of the bank, and handed over to them swindlin' blackmailers in the mornin'! I've got to make up for sech a tremendous pull as that somehow." A long pause, in which a pretty severe conflict was going on in his mind regarding a project that had been haunting him since his interview with Con Badger.

"I can work it so there'll be no p'ticler resk to me," he muttered, involuntarily placing his hand over the pocket containing Mrs. Stanhope's diamond cross, "and—*I'll do it!*"

Rising as he spoke, with an air of sullen determination on his frowning face, Captain Bluster walked into the street.

Half an hour later, he was standing in front of a rather dingy looking brick house at the South End, sandwiched in between a couple of more modern residences. There was neither bell nor knocker at the entrance, but Captain Bluster, who had visited the house before, gave three sharp knocks, followed after a short pause by a single one, and the door opened.

A Chinaman of melancholy and impressive visage received the captain and ushered him into a large room on the right, where he was met by a slender, olive complexioned man, with a wiry gray mustache and piercing black eyes.

"You are welcome, Captain—Prescott," he said, ex-

tending his slender brown hand, his characteristic features and accent suggesting his East Indian origin.

"Kasmir," said Captain Bluster, producing a small box containing the diamond cross and extending it to the keen eyed man opposite, "look at this—a—family heirloom I've got here, an' give me some kind of a estimate as to what it's wuth."

Not a muscle of the dark face moved as, opening the box, his eyes rested on the glittering ornament—every facet and angle of the stones throwing back the strong light from overhead in brilliant scintillations. Little did the captain, who was watching him closely, dream that it was only through his perfect self control that Kasmir could repress the exclamation which rose to his lips—for Kasmir had seen the gems before.

"It is difficult to say till each stone shall weigh by himself," replied Kasmir, finally, as he laid the cross on the table, and fixed his eyes on the captain's face.

"Well, now, look here, Kasmir," said Captain Bluster, clearing his throat and speaking in a cautious undertone, as he drew his chair a little nearer, "I've come to you because we've had dealin's together——"

"You twice have sell me small diamonds that you smuggle from Paris in your boot heel—yes," quietly interrupted the diamond merchant.

"Dealin's together," continued the captain, coughing, "an' because it's said there isn't your match for workin' with precious stones in the country. I want to—to raise some money, Kasmir," Captain Bluster went on, his visible embarrassment increased by the steady gaze of the East Indian; "an' to make a long story short—I want to see what kind of a barg'in I can make with you by lettin' you replace these di-

mins with first class imitations, and sellin' you the stones outright. It's a fam'ly affair, of course," added the speaker, trying very hard to appear unconcerned and perfectly at ease, "an' I'm only actin' for others, you understand."

"Oh, yes, I understand," was the perfectly truthful answer; and having stood for a moment in silent reflection, Kasmir crossed the room, where he pulled open the heavy door of a tall safe built into the wall. From a series of shallow drawers he selected one which was divided into compartments containing quantities of sparkling white stones of various shapes and sizes. This he brought to the table, together with a box of steel tools of exquisite workmanship, and a set of scales so delicately adjusted that an atom of dust would affect their balance.

Seating himself without speaking, Kasmir, with the aid of proper instruments, removed the diamonds from their claw settings, and having weighed each separately, noting down the result on a slip of paper, he laid them side by side on a small square of black velvet. Then from one of the compartments of the drawer the skilled workman selected several stones, and after matching them by weight, placed them beside the real ones.

Captain Bluster uttered an exclamation of delighted satisfaction. Only the most skilled expert could have discriminated between the real and false.

"Well, how much for the dimins, includin' puttin' them imitations back in good shape?" asked Captain Bluster with ill concealed eagerness.

"Two thousand dollars, not more, not less," said Kasmir, as he pulled open a drawer in the writing table, and took out a small printed circular, which he held carelessly in his hand.

"Two thousan' dollars an' a little work for seven

dimins like them!" angrily exclaimed Captain Bluster, rising to his feet. "Well, I *guess* not—there's plenty other brokers in the city besides you that'll do the job an' give me twice that."

"I think you will leave them here, and I shall give you two thousand—no more, no less," was the impassive answer. Laying the printed circular on the table, Kasmir motioned the captain to read it, which Captain Bluster proceeded to do. Its contents though brief were to the point, being simply a reward for the apprehension of any person who should offer for pawn or sale a certain diamond cross, fully described, for the return of which there was a standing reward of two thousand dollars.

With a very unpleasant remark, Captain Bluster threw the circular on the table, and himself into his chair.

"I can't help myself—fix the thing up, an' let me get off," he said, sullenly; "but it's a—a—infernal swindle."

"It would so appear to such an upright man of honorable dealing as Captain Prescott, without doubt," replied Kasmir, imperturbably; and taking his tools and jewels to a smaller table close to the safe, in less than an hour he finished his task in so skillful a manner that the sharpest eye could not detect the slightest sign of the ornament having been tampered with.

Taking a package of bank bills from the safe, Kasmir proceeded to count out the sum agreed upon, after which he pushed the money across the table to the captain. After counting it carefully, that worthy buttoned the notes in an inside pocket, and took his departure in a somewhat crestfallen mood.

Captain Bluster reached his hotel about midnight and went directly to his chamber. Next morning, together with Tom Scott and Lewis Reece, he paid a

visit to one of the banks, Mr. Green accompanying the party in a friendly capacity. A little later the three stood together in front of Brunton's, one poorer and two richer by the sum of twenty five thousand dollars. Mr. Green lingered near, chewing a toothpick in eloquent silence, watching the approaching herdic in which the captain was to be conveyed to the Eastern depot in time to take the express due at Burton Center at 5:30 that afternoon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PASSING AWAY.

THE Cole homestead lay bathed in the warmth and light of the setting sun.

From the gayly decked yachts in the harbor the sounds of merry laughter was faintly borne on the south wind to the ears of Miss Cynthia, who was sitting on the front portico, knitting in hand. Her rather anxious eyes were fixed on Aunty Badger, who sat in her accustomed place.

Roy had entered upon his new duties at the Burton Hotel that evening. Mr. Morris was on board the Juno, and Reba, overhead in her room, was sitting at the small, old fashioned cabinet organ, which had been her mother's.

As her slim fingers linger softly on the yellow keys, her clear voice, blending with the soft minor chords of the instrument, comes drifting through the great mass of cherry blossoms which look in at her open window·

"We wonder what city the pathway of glory
That broadens away to the limitless west
Leads up to. I mind me of some tender story,
And think of the city that mortals love best—
The pathway must lead to that far away city—
The beautiful city of rest.

Miss Cynthia is the most unimaginative person in existence, but as the words reach her ears she fidgets restlessly with her knitting needles.

"What under the canopy possessed the child to sing *that?*" she murmurs, for, curiously enough, Aunty Badger's sightless eyes are steadily fixed on a broad band of crimson and gold that the declining sun is leaving behind it across the smooth surface of the sea; and it may be that with mental vision she sees in it the highway leading up to the "rest that remaineth for the people of God."

Again Reba's voice broke the dreamy silence:

"The path as of old reaching out in its splendor,
Gleams bright like a way that an angel has trod,
I kiss the cold burden its billows surrender—
The clay to lie under the pitiless sod;
But she rests at the end of the path, in the city
Whose builder and maker is God."

There is a look in the peaceful old face that Miss Cynthia has never before seen. Laying down her work, she steps indoors to the foot of the stairs.

"Reby, dear," she calls, quickly, "run over to Doctor Osborne's, and, if he's at home, tell him to come here right away. Aunty Badger isn't so well today."

As Reba hurries down, and is donning her hat, Aunt Cynthia adds, with a little dimness of vision, which causes her to take off her spectacles and rub them briskly with a corner of her apron:

"An' perhaps, Reby dear, you better call to Cap'n Lewis's, an' if Con's to home, tell him——" here Miss Cynthia stopped to clear her throat—"that I want him over here a minute."

With an awed sensation of a presence near at hand, Reba hurried away on her errands.

"Cynthy," said the tremulous voice of Aunty Badger, breaking the silence, "thee has been a friend to the widowed and fatherless. God will reward thee, and may His blessing be on thee and thine forever."

Con Badger, who had been at the shore engaged

in ferrying passengers to and fro from the yachts, was hastily summoned by Captain Lewis, and now came hurrying up.

"I knew thee would be here in time, Constant dear," said Aunty Badger, as Con laid his hand on her shoulder with a trembling touch.

"Thee has been my comfort all these years, Constant dear," she went on, "as though thee had been my very own boy. God was very good to give me such a stay and support in my old age—my faithful, honest hardworking boy. Kiss me, dear," says Aunty Badger, brokenly.

Lower and lower falls Con Badger's head, and with a face crimson with shame at the remembrance of his life long deceit, he obeys; but a look of alarm chases the color from his cheeks as Doctor Osborne, walking rapidly up the gravel walk, nods briefly to each, and takes Aunty Badger's thin wrist between his fingers, with a glance at the wrinkled, colorless face.

"Aunty Badger is going out with the tide," the doctor says, in a low voice, and with a sympathetic look at Con.

Suddenly realizing it in all its fullness, Con drops on his knees and buries his face in the lap of the dying woman, whose wrinkled hand moves slightly and rests on his head like a benediction. Out of his heart, half bursting with sorrow, shame and contrition, came a great cry:

"I'm mean, and wicked, and low down. I haven't got folks to help me be decent like other fellers, but *she* loved me——"

The words are rude, but the grief is real. Dr. Osborne, turning aside his head, winks away a tear or two; Miss Cole shows signs of hysterics; and Reba, pale but calm, stands holding one of Aunty Badger's wrinkled hands with a thoughtful rather than an awe

struck face; "for after all," she tells herself, "for her it is only entering into rest after her three score years and ten of toil and endurance."

Only one more message has Aunty Badger to deliver, and the words come slowly from her pale lips —words that Con will carry with him through life as a safeguard and help:

"God bless my boy and keep him from the evil that is in the world." And then, as the golden pathway faded out from the face of the sea, and the ebbing tide sent little wavelets of sound to the beach below, Aunty Badger's soul went drifting out into eternity.

CHAPTER XIX.

ABOARD THE JUNO.

Well, between death and life there is only a step in this world of ours, and while some are dying others are making merry; and so, as this solemn scene was taking place on the shore, on board the two yachts at anchor in the harbor mirth and gayety was the order of the afternoon.

Hugh Penny moved about as a sort of master of ceremonies, personally supervising everything from the reception of the visitors to making suggestions to the stewards helping the assembled company to boned turkey, chicken salad, cake and coffee.

Mr. Granville appeared to take very little interest in the whole affair, sitting apart by himself; nor could the lively sallies of Madame Frissole, a wealthy New York lady, who formed one of the party, call him from his seclusion and his cigar, both of which he was enjoying in an easy chair placed abaft the wheel.

It was here he was sought out by Mr. Penny, who begged permission to introduce a friend—Mr. Edwards; and as Mr. Edwards, who looked surprisingly like our Mr. Edward Morris, laid himself out to be agreeable, Mr. Granville was gradually led to lay aside his gloomy reserve and enter into conversation, particularly after learning that his new acquaintance was a Harvard collegian.

"Do you happen to know a young Morris—Ed-

word Morris—at Harvard?" asked Mr. Peter Granville, puffing vigorously at his cigar. "He is, I am sorry to say, a nephew of mine,"

Yes, Mr. Edwards knew him very well; indeed, he was in the same class as himself—not a bad sort of fellow by any means; and though he had lately been rusticated, or, in other words, suspended for being a suspected ringleader in some college scrape, it was by no means certain that he was the real offender.

"Aha, suspended, eh?" returned Mr. Granville, with something like exultation. "Hum! It don't surprise me in the least—not in the least. If his father had taken up with *my* offer, sir, I'd have made the young scapegoat my heir once, but now——"

Here the irate gentleman pulled himself up abruptly, under pretense of lighting another cigar. His companion, adroitly changing the conversation, began speaking with considerable enthusiasm of the manifold advantages possessed by Burton-by-the-Sea as a future watering place, to which Mr. Granville listened with evident interest.

"I haven't been very long here, it is true," said Mr. Morris, warming with his theme, "but I am convinced, from what I have seen and heard, that the capitalist who is first to secure a desirable location—I have one now in mind that can be bought for a very low figure—on which to erect a summer hotel, will make as safe and paying an investment of his money as he could ask, for——"

"Why, who on earth is *that?*" interrupted Mr. Granville, taking his cigar from his mouth, as a rather loud, coarse voice rose above the the hum of conversation. "It sounds like a man that I hoped I'd seen the last of—a sea captain, sir, that I caned smartly in the cabin of his own ship at Madras many years ago."

"It is Captain Prescott Bluster, sir; he is coming this way with a gentleman of your party," said Morris, in a low tone.

A moment later, two vacant seats quite near them were taken by the captain, who had returned late in the afternoon, and his companion, a Mr. Oakes, who, having been introduced to him at the hotel, had mischievously induced the captain to accompany him on board, with the expectation of extracting some amusement out of him.

Mr. Granville seemed as though he was about to resent the intrusion, but fortunately checked the hasty impulse, and subsided into an attitude of attention to hear what further his companion might have to say on the subject of which he was speaking when interrupted a moment before. But before Morris could begin anew, Captain Bluster's voice again broke in:

"Good tap of champagne they have aboard here, Mr.—er—Oakes, an' I haven't smoked no better cigars sence I left Boston, which was only this mornin'—come through, sir, in less 'n eight hours on the lightnin' express."

"I hardly see, Captain Bluster," responded Mr. Oakes, gravely, "how a gentleman occupying the high social and financial position which you have in Burton, can afford to leave home even for a short time; you must be greatly missed by your fellow townsmen."

"Well, sir," replied the captain, with an important air, "it is difficult, but business must be attended to, especially when it not only indirec'ly concerns myself, but is also connected with the pecooniary interes' of the locality I represent."

"He's the same idiotic, self sufficient ass that he was in his sea faring days," muttered Mr. Granville in a confidential aside to Morris.

"*You*, I have been told, are a kind of a—er—speculative man, Mr. Oakes," said the captain, lowering his voice, "so I don't mind tellin' you in confidence that me an' two or three cap'talists up to Boston is goin' to buy a cert'n lot of land here in Burton, an' build a summer hotel of the first magnitude. Bizness is bizness, you know, my dear sir, so I—er—kind of tried to induce the ol' maid, who has the right of disposin' of it, to sell by hintin' at a flaw in the title."

"An admirable stroke of business no doubt, captain," returned Mr. Oakes, politely. "And now what do you say to stepping below for another glass of champagne?" an invitation which was very much to the captain's taste.

"Do you know that—that Bluster?" asked Mr. Granville, as the two took their departure.

"All that I wish to," replied Mr. Morris, briefly; and then he went on to tell Mr. Granville that it was the Cole homestead, where he himself was boarding, of which Captain Bluster had been speaking.

"I only hope he *won't* get hold of the property," said Mr. Morris, "for it is the land I mentioned a short time ago as being such a desirable location. To tell the truth, I have a little personal feeling in the matter, and only wish some moneyed man looking for a good investment would step in and outbid him."

"Shall you be at home Friday afternoon, Mr. Edwards?" abruptly asked Mr. Granville. "I should like to talk with you further about this matter." Mr. Morris replied in the affirmative, and shortly afterward walked away, with a hopeful feeling that his plan for helping Miss Cynthia out of her troubles was beginning to take definite form and shape.

Well, the entertainment, as a whole, passed off

very harmoniously, and about nine o'clock the boats began taking a portion of the guests back to the Voyager, while the remainder were conveyed to the shore in the same manner.

Captain Bluster was among the last to leave. Stepping into one of the boats rather unsteadily, he lurched heavily against Augustus Stanhope, who loftily resented the affront. This drew forth from the captain a contemptuous reference to young dudes who'd never set the river afire by reason of their own brilliancy.

"Nor set a building afire to get the insurance," was the very unexpected reply, which struck Captain Bluster dumb with confusion and amazement. Recovering himself, he began a most abusive tirade, which was cut short by Mr. Granville, who, stepping to the rail, remarked in a very emphatic voice:

"You have said quite enough, sir, and allow *me* to remark that your self invited presence on board my vessel I regard as an insult to myself and my guests, a repetition of which will insure you another such caning as I once had the pleasure of administering to you years ago."

Captain Bluster sank back in the stern of the boat in a state of speechless amazement, which lasted till the landing place was reached, and the passengers, including Mr. Morris and Mrs. Stanhope, had disembarked. But as he stepped up on the wharf, Mr. Morris saw him turn and shake his fist in the direction of the Juno.

"You had your turn once, old Peter Granville, but if you only knowed it, I've paid you up for it in full already," he said, thickly.

CHAPTER XX.

BLUSTER FORESTALLED.

Aunty Badger was laid to rest in the little cemetery on the hillside a day or two after the dinner party on board the Juno, and Con, with a very sober face, took up his round of life again.

People in Burton were beginning to see that he was really in earnest in his new effort at living down his past record, and as he openly shunned anything like intercourse with Rider, who was still living aboard the Wild Rover, Con began to be regarded with open favor.

He had seen Captain Bluster but once since the latter's return from Boston. The captain had put him off with the excuse of "important business," which had prevented him from carrying out his promise regarding the restoration of Mrs. Stanhope's cross, but told him that it should be attended to very soon. Knowing that he had the captain in his power to a certain extent, Con was content to wait a little longer.

Among his other occupations, he was regularly employed by Mr. Granville in ferrying him back and forth at a stated time of the day; for the wealthy man, who had learned something of the young fellow's story, was becoming greatly interested in and for him, and secretly determined that if he saw Con was disposed to hold out as well as he had begun, he would help him still further.

So, on Friday afternoon, for which Mr. Granville had made the appointment with Mr. Morris, Con made his appearance alongside the Juno with Captain Lewis's dory, which he had painted thoroughly inside and out, and made otherwise available for passenger traffic.

As the dory, with Mr. Granville in the stern, neared the landing place, the Wild Rover, with Rider, Cy Dobbs, and one or two other choice spirits on board, was just getting under way from the wharf.

"Look here, Rider," said Con, firmly, as he suffered the dory to drift within speaking distance, "next week I want the Wild Rover myself; you've had her full long enough, and I give you fair warning that I'm going to take her for good."

"It'll be the sickest day ever you saw when you step foot aboard this boat, you white livered sneak," was the threatening reply of the bully, which called out a burst of approving laughter from his companions.

"May be it will. All the same, I'm goin' to have my boat back," returned Con, steadily, as he shot the dory alongside the landing place, and allowed Mr. Granville to get out.

"That fellow and the light haired, long legged chap beside him, are the two that Mr. Morris, the gentleman you're going to call on, thumped so bad the day he tried to begin town school," said Con, after explaining to Mr. Granville regarding his ownership in the Wild Rover.

"Mr. *who?*" exclaimed Mr. Granville, staring at Con, as he was making the dory fast to the ring bolt.

"Mr. Morris, sir — Edward Morris — the young gentleman I brought off the Juno the day of the party," returned Con, innocently. "He's pretty poor, I expect,' continued Con, with a vague idea of enlist-

ing Mr. Granville's sympathies in his behalf, for Con was beginning to be very fond of Mr. Morris; "and though they do say he's got a rich uncle somewhere, I guess he don't help him very much, else Mr. Morris wouldn't be teachin' for a livin'."

"Mr. Edward Morris, eh?" muttered Mr. Granville, as he walked slowly up from the wharf. "The young rascal! I knew there was something in his face that looked familiar, for he's his father all over. Rusticated, Mr. Edward Morris, are you?" mused Mr. Granville; "and possibly trying to play some sort of trick on your old uncle; well, well, we'll see about that." Thus muttering to himself, though by no means ill naturedly, Mr. Granville pursued the even tenor of his way till he reached the Cole homestead, where he was met by Mr. Morris himself, who introduced him to Reba and Miss Cynthia, both of whom were sitting on the piazza.

Accepting a chair in the same shady retreat, Mr. Granville removed his hat, and looked about him approvingly, his eye taking in at a glance the beauty of the location, and its adaptability as a site for a summer hotel.

"Miss Cole," he said, in his abrupt, off hand manner, "how many acres are there in the whole estate here?"

Miss Cynthia, who was partly prepared for some such question through some hints thrown out by Mr. Morris, laid down her work with a sinking heart, and entering the house returned with some papers in her hand.

"There's forty five acres in all, includin' the medder lot and the timber," she said, in a hard, dry voice, as she resumed her chair.

Mr. Granville examined the deeds carefully, and stepping to the end of the portico, looked back at the gradual slope of the meadow behind the house, where

a building could be erected, which would command the finest outlook over the sea and surrounding country of any he had seen in visiting the different watering places along the coast.

Mr. Granville had a large sum of money lying uninvested in the bank; he was growing tired of yachting, and must have something to take up his attention. Why not a summer hotel, as well as anything else?

"I expect you are greatly attached to the old place," said Mr. Granville, kindly, as he watched the fair young girl, who was looking sadly from the little garden in front, with its box bordered beds of old fashioned flowers, to the hip roofed house itself, half overrun with woodbine.

"We are all attached to it more than words can express," replied Reba. For to her it seemed almost like sacrilege to part with the family roof tree, dire as was the necessity.

"Captain Bluster sent a note to Miss Cole this afternoon, offering two thousand dollars for the whole property," quietly remarked Mr. Morris, "but I advised her to pay no attention to it. Another season real estate is going to boom in Burton, and then if she concludes to sell, the land will bring three times what Captain Bluster offered."

"Joe's boy is no fool, if he has been to college. I wonder if he's got an axe to grind in this matter?" thought Mr. Granville, who was rather given to suspecting mankind of selfish motives. But he kept his thoughts to himself, and, after a little further conversation, took a walk round the place with Mr. Morris, during which he made his final decision, which he communicated in a few words to the latter.

"You can tell Miss Cole the offer I have made, and if she finds it a satisfactory one, the transaction had better be closed at once, Mr. *Edwards*," said Mr.

Granville, with a short, dry cough, as the two parted at the front door yard gate; Mr. Morris entering the house with a buoyant step, while Mr. Granville walked slowly away in the direction of Captain Lewis's.

The latter was building a new sail boat, near his house, which he claimed would outsail and outlive anything ever seen in Burton Harbo

The captain, in his shirt sleeves, was planing the outer planking of the little craft, which was shored up on some miniature ways. Her length was about twenty five feet, with some seven feet beam, and Captain Lewis pointed with some pride to an innovation on the established models of small boats, namely, an iron keel securely bolted and strapped to the keel proper of oak.

"Takin' that heft an' width of keel along of a cutter rig, sir," said the captain, wiping his forehead with the stump of his left arm, "an' you've got somethin' under you that you're safe to be out in a livin' gale in, and that won't be floppin' over like one o' these centerboard skimmin' dishes.

Further conversation was interrupted by the approach of Con Badger, who announced himself as being ready to take Mr. Granville back to the Juno whenever it suited that gentleman's pleasure. So, bidding the captain a courteous good by, Mr. Granville and Con walked down to the boat, and the owner of the Juno was quickly conveyed aboard.

"And now," mused Con, as he slowly pulled back to the wharf, "as I believe there's nothing else on hand this afternoon, I think I'll find out something, one way or the other, about this cross business. Captain Bluster's had plenty of time to do as he said, and I ain't going to wait his time any longer." So saying, Con made his boat fast and betook himself to the Burton Hotel.

The stage from Burton Center had just pulled up in front of the Burton Hotel as Con entered the door, and the half dozen passengers released from its capacious interior were thronging the small office, where Roy, behind the desk, assigned to each his room, as readily as though to the manner born.

Con decided, after seeing the easy and systematic manner in which the guests were disposed of, that Roy Cole had "a knack" for the vocation he had chosen, and already Mr. Merrill secretly congratulated himself on having secured the services of this bright, active young fellow, who had become a favorite with every one.

Roy was excellent at planning, and it was at his suggestion that, after the larger part of the more available rooms of the hotel had been filled by permanent boarders, Mr. Merrill had rented an empty building opposite, which had been the county court house years before, and, having it thoroughly renovated, hired bedding and furniture enough at Burton Center to make the rooms habitable as a sort of "annex" to the hotel itself.

Roy was not too busy to notice Con, and, having shaken hands heartily with him across the desk, answered his inquiry regarding Captain Bluster's probable presence in his own room, in the affirmative. Con ran lightly up the hallway stairs and entered Number Eleven in answer to Captain Bluster's bidding.

"What are you here for again—to try a second time to see if you can squeeze money out of me?" growled the captain, looking up from an account book in which he was casting up a column of figures.

"I've come to have some kind of an understandin' about that business of ours," said Con, firmly; "for I don't like this backin' and fillin'—how do I know

what kind of a game you may be plannin' to get the better of me?"

"Do you mean to cast an aspiration on my honesty?" angrily demanded the captain.

"On your *what?*" returned Con, with an affectation of astonishment; and Captain Bluster, choking back his wrath, as he remembered the damaging evidence in the possession of his plain speaking visitor, smiled in a ghastly sort of way.

"Well—er, Badger," said the captain, clearing his throat, "I don't hardly know what to say. I found that the dimuns was wuth consider'ble less'n what folks think round here, but they're toler'bly valuable after all. It's a dretful resky bizness any way—a *dretful* resky bizness, an' I'm sorry I inveigled myself into it. But I tell you what I will do," said the captain, as though weary of discussion and of the subject generally. "I'll give you five hundred dollars clean money today, instead of half what's offered for a reward as we first talked of, if you'll sign a writin' agreein' to give up all further claim in the matter; otherwise you'll have to wait *my* movements."

That Captain Bluster was driving a close fisted bargain went without saying. But just then Con wanted money badly for the carrying out of a recently projected scheme of his own, and five hundred dollars seemed a fortune in his eyes. He knew pretty well that Captain Bluster would not dare to commit any open act of dishonesty in the matter for fear of exposure.

"I'll take it," answered Con, suddenly. "Write out the receipt or whatever you call it, and I'll sign it, and much good may the money that you're cheatin' me out of do you! Only just remember one sure thing—Mrs. Stanhope's got to have her cross back before very long, or I'll tell the whole story from beginnin' to end, as true as you set there."

Affecting not to hear the concluding threat, Captain Bluster wrote out a receipt embodying all that he had previously specified. Con having bunglingly subscribed his name at the bottom, the captain tossed the paper into a drawer and counted out five hundred dollars in fifty dollar notes, which he extended to Con, who buttoned them away in his pocket with great expedition.

"I'd put twenty five dollars along of that five hundred," said Captain Bluster, sharply eying Con, "if you could put me in the way of findin' that pocketbook of mine that I pulled out in the Beehive the night——"

"Yes, I know," Con remarked with a grin, as the captain stopped short; "but though I'd like to earn the twenty five dollars fast enough, I, nor none of us, so far's I know, ever laid eyes on that pocketbook after you slung it on the table."

Con was speaking the exact truth, for he did not then know that on the following morning, Aunty Badger, while wiping off the mantel, discovered the missing pocketbook, and presuming it to be something that belonged to Con, dropped it into her capacious pocket, intending to call her adopted grandson's attention to it. But with the forgetfulness of old age, it entirely escaped her mind. All this he had evidence of later.

"The papers in it was wuth somethin' to me, but to nobody else," said Captain Bluster. "So, if ever you should get track of it let me know—the money'll be paid and no questions asked."

"All right," was the careless answer, and Con took his leave quite overpowered with the consciousness of having such a sum of money as five hundred dollars in his possession, while Captain Bluster, after a little mental calculation, decided that he had done a pretty fair stroke of business. There was the two

thousand from Kasmir, in the first place, and with two thousand more when the reward should be paid, there would be four thousand minus the five hundred just handed over to Con Badger.

"It's thirty five hundred clean profit in one sense," mused the captain; "but on the other hand, there was a twenty five thousand dollar loss to make up," and he ground his teeth together in sheer vexation of spirit.

"I'll go down to Dobbs's an' sound him again about that insurance," soliloquized the captain. "I hope there ain't goin' to be no hitch about that, but Dobbs was so kind of offish las' time I spoke about it, that I feel jest a bit uneasy. It ain't likely that saphead of a Stanhope could have spoken to any one of meetin' me—pooh! they can't prove nothin'."

Putting on his hat, he descended to the lower hall, where he was politely greeted by Mr. Green, who expressed his satisfaction at seeing Captain Bluster in such seeming health.

"Hang him," muttered the captain, as he passed out into the street, "what does *he* want here again?" And in no enviable frame of mind he entered the office of Mr. Dobbs, who was very busily engaged in drawing up a couple of legal looking documents.

"Dobbs," said the captain, calling up his usual air of pomposity, "isn't it most time for them insurance folks to decide about adjustin' that loss of mine?"

"Eh? Well, Captain Bluster," replied the squire, rather nervously, as he looked up, "the fact is they've had a letter from somebody down here, sort of hintin' that the Beehive was sot afire a' purpose, and so they're kind of hangin' back a little."

Captain Bluster felt a cold chill all over him at this remark. But controlling his agitation by a tremendous effort, he laughed scornfully.

"The same old excuse to evade payin'," he said with affected composure, "an' I suppose I'll have to bring suit against 'em to recover; but I can stan' it if they can—eh, Dobbs?"

"Oh, cert'nly," murmured Mr. Dobbs, applying himself to his writing with renewed assiduity. "By the way, cap'n," continued the squire, pressing a blotting pad on a completed page, "real estate's be ginnin' to look up here in Burton tremendously though, ain't it?"

"Burton folks may thank me for it, though," was, the important reply. "Why, Dobbs," continued Captain Bluster, inflating his shirt front with proper pride, "I am a bargainin' now for a piece of property—the Cole place over yonder—that I've offered two thousand dollars for within twenty four hours, an' in less'n a year from now, where that old rattle trap of a house stan's, you'll see a palashul structure that me an' some Boston capitalists is goin' to build. What do you think of *that*, Dobbs?"

"Guess you're a little too late," dryly returned the legal luminary, "for Miss Cynthy Cole has just sent down the old deeds of the place with orders for me to draw up a guardian's deed from her to Peter Granville—that rich New Yorker who owns the Juno —for the whole of the property exceptin' the old house itself and ten acres of land to go with it, the consideration bein' five thousan' dollars. It seems he's got this hotel buildin' craze, and——"

But the heavy banging of the office door behind Captain Bluster's manly form cut Mr. Dobbs's pleasing piece of information short, and with a slight chuckle the squire went on with his writing.

CHAPTER XXI.

CON BADGER'S SCHEME.

FIVE hundred dollars of his own! "If granny had only lived to enjoy it," thought Con, as he left the Burton Hotel, and walked thoughtfully along the street, "how happy we might have been!"

Well, Miss Cynthia and Miss Reba had both said that granny was ten times better off in Heaven, and, of course, they knew.

"Why, there's Rider *at work!*" he exclaimed, in unaffected surprise, the tide of his thoughts being turned in an entirely opposite direction at the unusual sight of Mr. Buck Rider, with overalls on, cleaning brick in the partly filled cellar where the old Beehive had formerly stood. Half a dozen other men were shoveling away the ashes and lime, and removing the charred beams and half burned timbers.

But after watching Rider's movements a little, and observing the position he had taken in the very midst of the debris of the fallen chimney, it did not take Con very long to understand the purport of his former companion's sudden impulse of industry.

"He's hopin' to find Mis' Stanhope's cross, as sure as you live," was Con's unspoken reflection, and he smiled inwardly to think that the young man would literally have his trouble for his pains, though, to be sure, he was earning his dollar a day honestly, which itself was something unusual. And while, for

the thousandth time, Con was trying to study out by what possible means the cross could have been so mysteriously transported from its hearthstone hiding place to a distant tree top, Mr. Kasner, who had been standing with other idlers looking down into the cellar, accosted him:

"Well, Con, how you vos these days, eh? S'pose you hear the news? Cap'n Blusther vos build one big hotel here; they says he did want Miss Cole's blace, but dot rich Mr. Granville gets ahead of him, an' builds anoder hotel, too; what you dinks of dot for Burton?"

Con thought it was quite surprising, and was very glad to hear it. But a matter of more importance to himself had suddenly suggested itself. Now would be a good time to claim his boat. Mr. Kasner was a fair man, and his presence gave Con a sort of feeling of both legal and physical support.

"Look here, Buck," called Con, "I gave you fair warning what I meant to do about the Wild Rover the other day; I'm going to take her now, and whatever you've got aboard, I'll put out on the wharf."

"Set your foot inside that boat if you dare," growled Rider, rising threateningly to his feet. "She's as much mine as she's yourn, and more, too, fer p'session's nine points of the law, an' the man that meddles with the Wild Rover'll find my fingers in his hair."

"I'll take care of my hair," returned Con, unflinchingly, "and I tell you again, with everybody here for witnesses, that I'm going to take possession of her myself."

"That's right, Con," said Mr. Beaman, the foreman, and two or three other workmen nodded approvingly. But Rider scrambled up over a pile of broken brick and crumbling mortar with an oath, and made a rush for Con, who manfully stood his ground.

"Shtop a little minute," said Mr. Kasner, interposing his burly form between the two. "We wants no wranglin'; I appoints myself the arbidrador here. You dakes your boat, Con, an' if Buck Rider meddles mit her, I will shwear out a warrant, an' arrest him minselves, dot is all."

"I'll have that boat back this very night, warrant or no warrant, so look out for yourself, Con Badger!" shouted Rider, in a towering rage, as Con turned away.

Making his way directly to the wharf, he stepped on board his boat, and looked about him with dismay. The paint work was dirty, the sail mildewed and torn, halyards stranded, and centerboard split.

"She'll have to have a good overhauling," he muttered to himself. Bundling Rider's scanty possessions into his ragged army blanket, he placed them, together with a dirty berth mattress, out on the wharf. Then, prying out the staple by which the boat was padlocked to the wharf, Con paddled her to the little creek where the dismasted schooner Dolly, belonging to Captain Lewis, was moored. Making the painter fast to the fore channels, he climbed on board, where by previous arrangement he was met by Captain Lewis, who beckoned him down into the cabin.

"Well, Con," began the captain, dropping heavily on one of the lockers; "I don't say but this here little apartment can't be made tidy an' convenient for a single young chap like you to go to housekeepin' in, but as I said las' night, it's for you to choose. You know you're welcome to live along of me an' Mr. Sims; but seein' you've kind of sot your mind on strikin' out for yourself, it isn't for me to stan' in your way. So, if you're satisfied to lease the Dolly here for ten dollars a month, as we talked, here's my hand on it."

"Very good, cap'n," was Con's brief answer, as he heartily shook the extended hand, "and after I've studied on it a little longer, I'll tell you the rest of my plan. I haven't chartered the old schooner Dolly just for lodging room. *No, sir;* I'm going to make some money out of her into the bargain."

"You ain't going to have her rigged up ag'in to go coastin'?" inquired Captain Lewis, with a mystified look.

"The Dolly won't go any further away from here than the end of Barker's wharf, cap'n," was the laughing reply.

Con accompanied Captain Lewis ashore, and made his way directly to Miss Cynthia Cole's to acquaint her with his purposed change of quarters.

"And I thought, Miss Cole," said Con, with downcast eyes, "seeing I'm sort of going to housekeeping for myself, I'd kind of like to have granny's old Bible and the little book, you know, that she said was mother's."

Miss Cole smiled approvingly, and going into the other room, she returned with a square package tied up in brown paper.

"They're both in here, I expect," she said, handing it to Con, "for the day before Aunty Badger left us, seems as though she had kind of a presentiment that she would never would use the old Bible much more, for I see her tyin' of it up with the little Shakespeare an' somethin' else that I couldn't make out. 'If I'm ever took away kind of sudden, Cynthy,' she says, turnin' to me, 'be sure and give these to my Constant. It's all I've got to leave him,' she says; so I hope, Con, you'll keep the Bible where you can have it handy to read—not shove it away somewheres in a closet an' think no more about it."

Con, who dared not trust his voice just then, only looked the thanks he could not speak, and walked

away with the package under his arm. Stopping at Mr. Shepherd's country store on his way back, he made quite a number of purchases.

He bought a little stove like those used in small coasting vessels, a berth mattress and some dishes, crockery and knives and forks, which, with quite a collection of small stores, he ordered sent down to the schooner Dolly, where he found them on his arrival half an hour later.

He took everything on board, set up his stove, disposed his things about the cabin to the best advantage, and, lighting his lamp as soon as it was dark, felt very snug and cozy in his new surroundings.

Remembering Rider's threat, Con took the precaution to add a padlock and chain to the fastenings of the Wild Rover, which he had moved, stem and stern, alongside his floating home. But the boat lay undisturbed, and on the following day Con went to work at repairing and repainting.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FRUITLESS CHASE.

Mr. Granville, full of his new plans and projects, had completed his bargain with Miss Cynthia Cole. The Juno was to sail on the following morning for Boston, where an architect and a building contractor were to be consulted.

His guest, Madam Frissole, had made a sudden and unexpected change in her own arrangements. Generous hearted, impulsive madam had fallen in love, and with no other than Reba Cole.

Madam saw in her dark beauty a real or fancied resemblance to a daughter who had died at the age of eighteen, and having heard Reba sing, at once decided that the big Madison Square brown stone house that she called her New York home would be less drear by the presence of such a young and lovely face.

"Let her come to me for one year as a visitor or companion, as she herself shall elect," madam had said to Miss Cynthia, "and she shall have every educational advantage that money can procure; her voice shall be cultivated, and Reba herself shall be to me as my very own."

Fully aware of the manifold advantages of such a generous offer, Miss Cynthia used her influence to induce Reba (who seemed strangely indifferent to the matter) to accept it.

And so it had come about that Reba was about to

take her a flitting from the home nest for a new and untried phase of existence.

"If Reba ever does come back, she'll never be the same once she's got fairly into the swim of fashion," said Roy.

"She *will* come back—jest the same Reba as ever, too, an' home'll seem twice as dear to her as 'twas before, homely as 'tis," snapped Miss Cynthia, furtively wiping away a tear from her wrinkled cheek.

But Mr. Morris said little or nothing on the subject, and Reba secretly wondered at what seemed to be his cool indifference when the final good bys were said. But he was not one to wear his heart upon his sleeve.

As Mr. Morris was returning from a run on his bicycle on a certain lovely summer's day, he observed Doctor Osborne standing by his gate, looking attentively across the road at the open front door of Mrs. Jared Smith's, seeming in a listening attitude.

"Didn't notice anything unusual as you came by there, did you, Mr. Morris? I thought just now I heard some one calling——"

From the open front door of the dwelling in question, came a scream of metallic shrillness, followed by the voice of Augustus Stanhope who was shouting:

"Stop thief—he's stolen a watch! Hi, there! stop him I say!" with evident reference to a shabbily dressed man who was hurrying from the door.

"One of those rascally tramps who've been hanging about Burton for the last day or two," hastily exclaimed Morris.

He turned his machine sharply about and started in pursuit of the fugitive.

Rather to Mr. Morris's surprise, the thief kept the middle of the road, when it would have been the easiest thing in the world for him to leap the fence

on either side and evade pursuit in the woods. Mr. Morris put additional speed to his machine and gained rapidly. As the pursuer rounded an abrupt turn, the thief, suddenly slackening his pace, turned sharply about, and drawing a revolver, brought the muzzle in a direct line with his pursuer's face.

"I'll trouble you to dismount!" he said, in a gruff and evidently assumed voice.

Unarmed and taken entirely by surprise, Mr. Morris had no recourse but to obey.

"Your pistol gives you the advantage, you cowardly scoundrel!" he exclaimed, in a white heat of wrath.

"Exactly," was the cool reply. "Now lean that machine of yours against the nearest tree."

Morris hesitated, but a glance at the ends of the leaden pellets plainly visible in the cylinder of the leveled revolver, and the nervous fore finger just touching the side of the trigger was rather too much even for his well regulated nerves.

"What now, my money or my life?" sullenly said Morris, staring fixedly at the man, and taking in at a glance his curly wig, smoke colored glasses, brown mustache entirely hiding his mouth; battered felt hat pulled down over his forehead; long coat, shiny and greasy with service, buttoned closely up to his chin, dusty trousers and thick shoes.

"Now *vamose!*" was the sharp response. So significant was the voice; and suggestive the movement of the trigger finger that Mr. Morris silently obeyed.

Thrusting his weapon into a breast pocket, the highwayman, stepping to the side of Mr. Morris's bicycle, sprang to the saddle with the ease of an expert, and, waving his hand mockingly to Morris, started off.

Mr. Morris hurried to the telegraph station, where

he wired the authorities at Burton Center, giving them an accurate description of the bicycle thief, and warning them to be on the lookout for any such individual.

Leaving the post office, he encountered Hugh Penny.

"There's a detective stopping at the Burton Hotel, I hear," said Hugh, after having heard his friend's hastily narrated story—"a Mr. Green he calls himself, who has been here once before, though no one seems to know what his business here is, unless Captain Bluster does. Why not give him a few points if we can find him?"

Morris thought this a timely suggestion, and making their way to the hotel, they learned from Roy that Mr. Green was not in his room.

"I've got an hour or two to spare this afternoon," said Hugh, after a little reflection, "so suppose we wait until this Mr. Green comes in. I've got a bit of a story I've been meaning to tell you for some time, and perhaps I won't have a better chance, for the Juno will be off tomorrow or the next day for Boston, and I may not return again in her."

"It is pleasanter in the open air; come out on the piazza," suggested Mr. Morris; and, leaving word with Roy to send Mr. Green to them if he should return, the two found seats in a secluded corner, and Mr. Penny began.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HUGH'S DIAMONDS.

"For reasons that you will understand further on," began Penny, taking off his cap and allowing it to lie on his lap, "I have chosen to be known as Hugh Penny, though my whole name is Hugh Penny Cowen. Mother died when I was a baby—father, who was a well to do diamond broker in New York, married a second time when I was ten years old. My stepmother, who came from a poor but aristocratic family, married father for his money. She disliked me from the first, I being a strong, healthy boy, with a boy's dislike of sham and affectation. She made home too unpleasant for me finally, and I ran away, managing to get a berth as boy aboard the steamship Atlantic, of the White Star line. Well, you know of her terrible loss on the Nova Scotia coast some years since, and what a sensation it made at the time. Young as I was, I shall remember to my dying day the awful scene, when five hundred and forty six souls were swept into eternity. One of the quartermasters pulled me on to a bit of the floating wreck, to which he was clinging, and we were taken off a little later by a shore fishing boat, but my name, though I did not then know it, was afterward published among the list of the lost. I worked my way to Quebec, and there shipped in a lumber carrier for London.

"It was five years before I returned to New York, never having heard from home in all that time, and

I found some marked changes in my former home. Father had died suddenly a short time after my departure, leaving—so I learned—his entire property to my stepmother, who, two years later, married Mr. Stanhope, a wealthy widower with one son,"

Mr. Morris gave a slight start of surprise, at which Mr. Penny smiled, paused a moment as though to collect his ideas, and went on:

"One son, Augustus by name. They were living in considerable style up town. Having business of some importance to myself with my stepmother, I found my way to the house.

"The husband and Augustus were both absent. As you may imagine, Mrs. Stanhope was not willing at first to acknowledge my identity, but when I had convinced her and told her what I had come for, then there was a scene!

"You see, it was this way," continued Hugh, unconsciously lowering his voice. "My own mother was of English parentage, and father, who was traveling in the East Indies, met her at Madras, where they were afterward married. While at Madras he had the good fortune to save the life of a very wealthy native worker in metals and precious stones, who had been attacked by robbers on his way from his place of business with diamonds worth a king's ransom in his possession. Father shot one of the scoundrels and put the others to flight, for which service the East Indian's gratitude knew no bounds. The day I was born he placed in father's hands a box containing seven diamonds of more than average size and luster, and with them this letter, which father gave me."

Taking from his pocketbook a carefully folded square of thin rice paper, he extended it to Morris, who, opening it in silence, read as follows:

"Will Sahib to himself take this choice of stones for the fort-

une of his first born, which shall grow up a happy man, seven to be the lucky number all this world over. Excuse the English that is not yet good. KASMIR."

"Why it's like a—a romance," exclaimed Mr. Morris, handing back the paper and staring at his unmoved companion with almost incredulous astonishment.

Penny slightly shrugged his shoulders and went on in the same even, unemotional tone.

"Well, of course, father protested against such a princely gift, but in vain. So, when after mother's death he returned to America and began business, he placed the diamonds in his safe, securely sealed in a parchment envelope, marked: 'the property of my son Hugh P. Cowen, to be given him when he shall arrive at years of discretion.'

"Well, I explained all this in detail to my stepmother in my interview with her, but she on her own part affected to regard it as a trumped up story. She declared that nothing of the kind had been found in father's safe or among his valuables, and pronounced Kasmir's letter an impudent fabrication. In short she denied and ignored the whole thing, till I was quite at my wits' end to know what to do or say, for something told me she was lying.

"'I will wait till Mr. Stanhope comes,' I finally said. 'He perhaps will see that justice is done me;' and as I said this she grew whiter than the fleecy shawl, the folds of which she was holding closely about her throat with her right hand.

"'Impostor!' she blazed out, 'leave the house at once, or I will have you expelled by the servants!' In her excitement she attempted to emphasize her command by a gesture, and releasing the clasp of her fingers, the shawl fell from her shoulders, revealing in the lace at her throat a heavy gold cross containing seven large diamonds. With a sudden exclamation which betrayed her, she clapped her

hand over the ornament, but not before I was sure that I recognized my diamonds.

"Then she wore round on another tack, and swore that before father's death he had them set in the cross, and gave them to her as a birthday gift, and when I persisted in disbelieving the story, she openly defied me.

"'Tell Mr. Stanhope what you please,' she cried, 'I will tell him *my* story, which will contradict your own in every particular—which will he be likely to believe?"

"Well, perhaps I was a fool, perhaps not. But seeing that Mrs. Stanhope would fight to the bitter end to keep possession of the jewels, I rose to go. 'You have stolen my inheritance,' I said as calmly as I could, 'but right will prevail, and some day or other I shall have my diamonds back again.' And then without a word or look I left the house, and the next day was afloat."

"But I'm afraid your prophecy will never be fulfilled, Hugh; it don't look very much as though the diamonds would ever be yours or Mrs. Stanhope's either again," said Morris, after he had exhausted his expressions of surprise and interest in the singular story to which he had listened.

"Something tells me that 'the king shall ha'e his ain again,' improbable as it seems, Morris," replied Hugh, "and though I——"

"One of you gentlemen left word at the office that you wished to see me, I believe," interrupted a quiet voice directly behind Morris, who, turning quickly, saw the smooth shaven, dark featured man with inscrutable eyes whom our readers know as Mr. Green.

"I have been told by my friend Mr. Penny, here, that you are interested in a—in fact, that you do something in the detective way, Mr. Green," said Morris, as Penny, sitting a little back in the shadow

of one of the pillars, studied the imperturbable face before him.

Mr. Green bowed in a non committal sort of way, as he drew a chair near the two and listened in silence to the young man's account of the scene with which we are already familiar.

"I have been told since I came in that this Mrs. Stanhope offers fifty dollars for the return of her watch and chain, which is very liberal, as the two are estimated to be worth about four hundred," said Mr. Green, in a voice slightly tinged with irony.

"What reward do you propose offering for the return of your bicycle, Mr. Morris?"

"It cost a hundred and twenty five dollars six months ago—I will give you fifty for its recovery," Mr. Morris answered after a moment's reflection, while Mr. Penny whistled but said nothing.

Rather extravagant, he thought, a young man must be to spend that amount for a bicycle when he had to teach for a living; still it was none of his business.

Mr. Green made another entry in his note book, said briefly that he'd "think it over," whatever that might imply, and took his departure.

Morris and Hugh Penny again engaged in conversation, during which, in exchange for the young sailing master's confidences, Morris told him concerning his own relationship to Mr. Granville, and his reasons for concealing it from him.

But the hour for separation was approaching, and Morris accompanied his friend to the wharf where the boat was waiting in readiness for him.

"I think you'll decide to come back to Burton, Hugh," said Morris, as, after exchanging a hearty handshake, the former entered the boat.

"We shall see what we shall see," was the enigmatic reply. "Good by, old fellow."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HIGHWAYMAN DEFEATED.

Quite early on the following morning the Voyager with her merry party got under way for Mount Desert, while the Juno, with Mr. Granville, who was completely taken up with his hotel building project, sailed for Boston.

Having learned that Captain Bluster had not entirely given up his own plans in the same direction, Mr. Granville purposed outgeneraling him at all hazards. He had conceived the bold idea of having his specifications drawn while absent, and having a vessel dispatched at once to Burton with such building materials as were not procurable there, while, at the same time, he purposed returning in the Juno with a building contractor and such gangs of men and working implements as were necessary for the speedy forwarding of his contemplated project.

Scarcely had the white sails faded away in the distance, when another vessel, very dissimilar in appearance, was moored alongside the wharf—a vessel owned by Captain Lewis, and commanded by one Con Badger.

Strangely changed in outward appearance was the dismasted schooner Dolly. From rail to water line her hull was painted in alternate longitudinal stripes of red, white and blue, while in large letters a foot long and extending halfway between stem and stern was the tempting announcement, "*Ice Cream.*"

A wide gangway plank with a hand rail led from the wharf to the well scoured deck, protected by a neat awning, beneath which were placed small tables and chairs for each. Almost before the Dolly was fairly ready for the reception of guests, small parties of ladies and gentlemen were finding their way on board, where they were served with ice cream, cakes and ice water by a couple of boys in white linen jackets and aprons. Con, as general manager, moved hither and thither, anxiously hopeful for the result of his first experiment in the way of a business speculation.

Moored alongside were the Wild Rover, which had been thoroughly overhauled and repainted, and also the new boat built by Captain Lewis, who attended personally to the letting of them.

Where Con Badger could have got the money to make such a start in life was, of course, a question which caused more or less gossip and conjecture among the Burton people; but he was so evidently in earnest in his attempts at living down his past record, that it was finally decided that Captain Lewis, or possibly Mr. Granville, who had taken an evident fancy to Con, had furnished the capital. For a time the matter was dropped, especially as a far more serious topic began not only to engage people's attention, but even arouse their apprehension.

For after the affair in which Mrs. Stanhope's watch and Mr. Morris's bicycle had played such prominent parts, it became evident that this marauder was lingering in the vicinity and committing a series of depredations, some of them being of a decidedly serious nature. Houses were entered, and even the guests of the Burton Hotel and the Annex were complaining of mysterious losses.

Buck Rider, who had worked steadily in the cellar of the old Beehive till the last brick of the fallen

chimney had been cleaned and piled up outside, asserted that he had seen a mysterious individual mounted on a bicycle flashing in and out of the village streets since this unpleasant state of things had begun.

Mr. Green, whose professional instincts seemed keenly aroused, had cross questioned Rider sharply on the subject, and, it was whispered, was secretly watching his movements more sharply still. Day and night alike he was on the alert, sometimes being away from the hotel for hours at a time, but keeping his own counsel as to his whereabouts, or the result of his investigations.

"I'll get at the bottom of this if I stay all summer," he said confidentially to Roy, who himself was greatly troubled in spirit at the petty thieving that was going on in the hotel and Annex itself. For scarcely a morning dawned that some guest had not a trifling loss to report—a ring, a card case, a gold thimble, or something of comparatively small value. Yet the room doors were kept securely bolted and locked, and their occupants slept undisturbed. Roy, armed with Mr. Merrill's revolver, made a circuit of the grounds, the halls, and the corridors at stated intervals throughout the night.

About a fortnight after the sailing of the two yachts, a whist party was given by one of the Annex boarders, which was attended by the majority of the guests of the hotel. Mr. Green, who had been absent all the afternoon, returned quite late in the evening. He glanced at the merry party carelessly as he passed the open windows, and went rapidly up to his own room. Having made certain preparations there, he came swiftly down stairs, pausing a moment by the open door of the smoking room, where two or three gentlemen were amusing themselves very quietly at the expense of Captain Bluster, who

was holding forth in his usual grandiloquent strain.

"No, gentlemen," the captain was saying, "I think I am safe in statin' to you that I never knowed what it was to fear no livin' mortal, though through a var'gated and vicissitudinous life I've been called upon to face nigh every kind of peril; an' I'd like nothin' better than to encounter that bicyclin' bu'glar, that this Green, who calls himself a detective, can't get no track of——"

"Perhaps, Captain Bluster," quietly interrupted Mr. Green, stepping into the room, "you would give me the pleasure of your company this evening, and between us we may be able to get on the track of the mysterious bicyclist.

"I don't generally tell my business to outsiders," continued Mr. Green, addressing the other gentlemen, while Captain Bluster, who had changed color visibly, was evidently casting wildly about in his mind for a reasonable excuse, "but on my way to the hotel I learned that Mr. Myers, who left here this afternoon for Burton Center, in a wagon driven by one of the hostlers, was waylaid just at the foot of Burton Hill by the 'bicycling highwayman.' He was made to deliver up his watch and something like three hundred dollars in money. So, it being a bright moonlight night, I'm going to see if I can't bring him to bay, bicycle and all. If you have no weapons, Captain Bluster, I can loan you one of these," throwing open his coat as he spoke and displaying a filled cartridge belt about his waist, to which was suspended, on either side, an ebony handled revolver in its stamped leather holster.

"I—I—should be delighted," stammered Captain Bluster, on whose face all eyes were bent, "but—er —my rheumatism is worse in the night air——"

"Bah!" exclaimed Mr. Green, contemptuously,

and turning on his heel he left the room, his quick, firm steps a moment or two later growing fainter and fainter along the deserted street.

The smokers soon adjourned to the piazza, where they were joined an hour later by a number of the gentlemen from the whist party, so that almost every chair was occupied. Even the ladies manifested their interest in the result of Mr. Green's expedition by remaining up till a much later hour than usual.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by the distant report of a pistol shot, followed by another, and then a third.

"By Jove! Green is after the highwayman!" exclaimed somebody, as nearly every one started to his feet.

"Or the highwayman after Green," suggested a would be wit.

Two or three of the more courageous who proposed to start at once for the scene of action were overruled by the female element, and then followed a half hour more of suspense.

"Hark!" said one of the ladies as the silence was broken by a distant sound, which, growing nearer, was somewhat suggestive of a wheelbarrow rapidly trundled over the hard ground, while an indistinct moving object was seen approaching at a rapid rate.

"The highwayman on his bicycle!" cried an excited individual, and a general stampede ensued, Captain Bluster stepping suddenly indoors, as he said, to get some sort of weapon.

"Don't be alarmed," said the familiar voice of Mr. Green, who came spinning through the moonlight toward them. Leaping lightly from Mr. Morris's bicycle, he gave it into the keeping of one of the stable boys. In another moment he was surrounded by an excited group of questioners.

"There's very little to tell," he said, removing his hat and wiping his forehead. "Only that by good luck I met the fellow trundling along on the bicycle, and sung out for him to stop. He fired—so did I, twice, and the second time I think the ball struck him on the leg, for he pitched into the road. But he picked himself up before I could reach him, and dodged into the woods, leaving Mr. Morris's bicycle behind him.

"Luckily for me," continued Mr. Green, exhibiting a bullet hole through the crown of his derby hat, "the fellow's pistol threw high, or my head would have suffered instead of my hat."

CHAPTER XXV.

CON'S CONFESSION.

HARDLY had the excitement caused by Mr. Green's encounter with the mysterious highwayman begun to subside somewhat, when the village was again thrown into a stir by the news that the Juno had just dropped anchor in the harbor, loaded down like an emigrant vessel with a building contractor's gang of workmen bringing their implements and tools from the distant city.

Mr. Morris, who at the solicitation of Mr. Granville had given up his French class and accepted a rather more lucrative position as a sort of general business manager, paymaster and amanuensis for the wealthy gentleman, was the first to board the yacht. Here, to his great gratification, he found Hugh Penny, who had decided to stay by the vessel for a time longer.

Mr. Morris informed Mr. Granville that he had concluded arrangements with Mr. Merrill, the hotel proprietor, for the accommodation of the workmen in an unused storehouse near the wharf. After seeing them disembark, Mr. Morris informed Mr. Granville and Hugh of the recapture of his bicycle by Mr. Green, to whom he had cheerfully paid the promised reward.

"There have been no further 'highhanded outrages,'" said Mr. Morris, in conclusion, "and I am in-

clined to think that in losing the bicycle the mysterious highwayman has also lost his courage, for I can hardly associate him with the petty thieving from the hotel rooms which still goes on in a spasmodic sort of way."

"Don't they suspect any one in the house?" asked Mr. Granville.

"Captain Bluster has been good enough to throw out hints affecting young Cole's honesty in the matter," was the contemptuous reply, "but of course no one gives the slightest heed to what he says. Roy is naturally very much fretted and worried in regard to the whole affair."

"Roy Cole!" scornfully repeated Hugh Penny. "I should sooner think it was Bluster himself," but as at the mention of the name Mr. Granville's face began to lower, the subject was dropped, and shortly afterward Mr. Morris and Mr. Granville were set ashore. Con Badger's floating ice cream saloon was the first thing that attracted Mr. Granville's attention, and nothing would do but Mr. Morris should accompany him on board for a few moments, where he spoke so kindly and encouragingly to Con that the young fellow was not only greatly gratified but emboldened to prefer a request concerning a subject which had been weighing pretty heavily on his mind for the past week or two.

"If you've nothing better to do some of these evenings, sir," said Con, in an undertone, "I wish you'd come aboard; I want to ask somebody's advice about a certain thing, and somehow feel as though you was just the one to tell me what I want to know."

Thinking that probably Con wanted to consult him in regard to his business, which certainly looked to be in a very flourishing state, Mr. Granville willingly promised to come, and took his departure with his companion.

Having been repeatedly addressed by Con and one or two others, whom they met, as "Mr. Morris," that person was rather surprised at Mr Granville's seeming unconsciousness of the fact, but attributing it to preoccupation, thought it as good a time as any to make himself known before any awkward complications came up.

"Now for an explosion," he said. inwardly Bracing himself to meet it he began:

"Mr. Granville—I—have used a little innocent deception regarding my true name, which is not Mr. Edwards, but Mr. Edward Morris. In fact, I am the nephew that you haven't had very kindly feelings toward for a number of years."

"Oh, I knew that some time ago," returned Mr. Granville, coolly, and with a slight twinkle in the corner of his keen gray eye. "But as you seem to have turned out to be a tolerably promising young man notwithstanding your collegiate course, the relationship needn't make the slightest difference."

Mr. Morris was slightly crestfallen at the matter of fact manner in which his uncle received his disclosure, though secretly relieved on the whole.

He waited for Mr. Granville to say something further on the subject, but in vain. In fact, he could think or talk of nothing else but his new project.

On the morning following, the first ground was broken on the slope at the rear of the Cole homestead and the work actually begun. Foundation stone was to be had in abundance within a short distance; a schooner load of lumber and another of brick were already lying alongside the wharf; all the available men and teams in Burton found ready employment, and from morning till night the sounds of saw and hammer, pick and spade were blended with the voices of the busy workmen. While Miss Cynthia Cole rejoiced in secret at these signs of

coming prosperity, the heart of Captain Bluster was filled with bitterness and envy; for, upon learning that Mr. Granville had secured the most desirable location and had made such a decisive start in the matter, Mr. Loder, the captain's chief supporter, had suddenly backed out.

Mrs. Stanhope's cross, with its counterfeit diamonds, still remained in Captain Bluster's safe. The longer he delayed returning it and claiming the reward, the more timorous he became—his cowardly conscience continually keeping before him the inevitable consequences of the discovery of his criminal act.

Con Badger, suspicious that the captain's refusal to restore the cross to its owner was simply due to some underhand scheme by which he was planning to keep it in his own possession, had finally made up his mind to lay the whole matter before Mr. Granville, on the principle that "a bad promise is better broken than kept." The return of the cross he was determined upon, partly to relieve himself from the haunting sense of guilt regarding his own complicity in the matter, and in part from a desire that Captain Bluster should be beaten at his own game if he was meditating further rascality. So it was with quite a sensation of relief that he welcomed Mr. Granville when he made his appearance in the Dolly's cabin the following evening.

"Why, what a snug little home you've got here, Con," said his visitor, taking the proffered chair and looking about him with a pleased air. For Con's bump of order and neatness was quite strongly developed, and the pleasant interior illumined by the rays of the bracket lamp looked really inviting.

"It's a pretty long story I've got to tell, sir," began Con, after glancing through the open companionway to make sure that no one was in hearing,

"and I'll have to begin at the very first;" which he did, speaking frankly of his early years and the evil associations consequent upon being reared in the city slums, fatherless and motherless from infancy, and with only old Aunty Badger, enteebled by age and infirmities, to counsel or guide him.

"Which isn't much excuse for my going so to the bad," said Con, sorrowfully, as he rested his hand unconsciously on the package containing Aunty Badger's legacy, which had been handed him by Miss Cynthia a few days before; "but I've often thought if mother had lived I might have turned out better."

After speaking of his acquaintanceship with Buck Rider and the gradual ascendancy gained by the stronger mind over the weaker, Con cleared his throat. "Of course," said he, with a visible effort, "you've heard about Mrs. Stanhope's losing her diamond cross?"

Mr. Granville nodded.

"Well, sir," continued Con, slowly, "that cross, instead of being lost, as folks round here think for, is in a certain man's hands in this very town; and now, sir, I'm going to tell you the whole story from beginning to end—it's been worrying me too long already." And then Con gave to his astonished and interested hearer a faithful account of everything he knew regarding the diamond cross from the time it fell into Buck Rider's hands till Captain Bluster possessed himself of it. As that gentleman's matters were so involved with many of the transactions, Con, after swearing Mr. Granville to secrecy, was obliged to reveal the nature of the interview between the captain and the two men whom he had so shamefully wronged.

"Why, he's even a bigger villain than *I* thought him, Con," said Mr. Granville, as his companion con-

cluded. "The only weak part of your story is to account for the presence of the piece of handkerchief containing the cross in the top of a tree a mile distant—*that* I must confess I can't quite follow out."

"I know it sounds kind of—well—*tough*," returned Con, hesitating for a word, "but it's Gospel truth, all the same."

"Well, returned Mr. Granville, "the main point *now* is to compel that swindling scoundrel, that—that —*Bluster*"—emphasizing the name in a most forcible manner—"to return the cross to its owner—for that, Con, I suppose, is what you want my advice about."

"That's it exactly, sir," returned Con, with sparkling eyes, "for he's such a regular underhanded sort of a man, I'm afraid he'll contrive to get the better of me somehow."

"Con," abruptly interposed Mr. Granville, who had been attentively regarding the features of his young companion, "you say that your parents died when you were a baby—do you know anything about them, who they were, or where they belonged?"

"Why, no, sir," returned Con, a little surprised; "or, that is, I only know what little Granny Badger has told me, which wasn't much any way, except that mother was a real lady in *her* way of thinking, if she had sung on the stage, or something of the kind. She told granny that father had died at sea, or was lost—she didn't seem to know which. She left a little book with her name and some other writing in it when she died," continued Con, seeing that Mr. Granville was listening to him with kindly interest, "and its here with granny's old Bible, if you'd like to see it."

Cutting the string of the package on the table, Con opened it, but forgot all about the little pocket edition of Shakespeare, when lying uppermost before his astonished gaze, he saw:

"Cap'n Bluster's pocketbook!"

Such was Con's startled exclamation, as the article in question was revealed. And then came conjectures as to the manner in which it came into Aunty Badger's possession, the most probable one being that having found it where it fell on the eventful night of Captain Bluster's interview with Reece and Tom Scott, she had forgotten to speak of it to Con at the time.

"Now, let's see if his money is all right," said Con, and carelessly throwing it open, a confused mass of bills and papers fell out on the table before them.

"Why—hollo! here's a letter for *you*, Mr. Granville," suddenly exclaimed Con, as he was recollecting and returning the papers to the pocketbook, "though by the looks of it, it wasn't written yesterday or the day before."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A REVELATION.

"A letter for *me*," repeated Mr. Granville, in a voice of astonishment, as he extended his hand to receive a worn and soiled envelope addressed: "Peter Granville, Esq., 304 Horton Place, New York City," which had fallen with some other papers from an inner compartment. "Why, what—"

But scarcely had he cast his eye on the wrapper, in one corner of which was written: "Will Jim Kelly or Martin Baldwin post this letter on arrival at San Francisco," when Mr. Granville grew deadly pale.

"There's something on the other side," said Con, considerably surprised at Mr. Granville's visible emotion, and turning the envelope over, the latter read, written as a memorandum across one end:

"John Smith ordinary seamen dide at sea Jan. 3. I took charge of his Effecks And this Leter see Log book same date. P. Bluster."

With the same ashy pallor on his strongly marked features, Mr. Granville drew from the envelope a soiled sheet of paper.

The handwriting and spelling were those of some illiterate person who was following the dictation of the author of the letter, which read thus:

"ABORD SHIP ORIFEROUS, Jan. 1, 186—.

"father Long befoar you receive This if you ever Do which is written By a kind Shipmate (please Excuse writin I am no scolar J Kelly) my wore Out body will Be layin under the pe-

cific bilows but Bad as i have been I cauot die without A good bye. i can Only say forgive me. When you Turned me away from yore dore the nite we had the troubel about munny i Swoar i would never Entir the howse agane and i never have, you know i had A Taste for Amatoor theatrikels and Finaly I becom a Actor under the name of Wharncliffe. While on the staig i met doris Thayne the singer who was english Born and A Lady not butiful But good and Pure I Loved her and we were marid and Til our Boy baby was born when you found out about Me and rote me That leter of biter words because i had Marid an Aektress we were more hapy Than tung can tell. Then i began to Drif into my old ways with A wild set. I dare not speke of it. The face of My wife and Child hant Me, I was away A week and going home Repentant to beg doris to forgive me And Help me Try agane. In oliver strete i was nocked down with a sand Bag And when i Recoved my censes found myself aboard the ship John Addam's bound for Japan With two more Lansmen shanghide like Miself salors being Very scarce. what i suferd Body and mind only god nows. But i Livd through and shipt abord the oriferous for san fransisko The only american ship in Port. we touched at melborn whare two Pasingers come abord it is said with a large amount of munney and i certify that I saw Them set adrif in a boat by captain prescott bluster who is a feend incarnit and at whose hans i Have receeved my deth wound a bulet through The lungs which he said He fird in Self defens because i atackt him to save a swede boys life.

"But i grow weke and must hurry father my wife and boy Babby are at 230 varick street and as you Hope for Forgivnes in The heerafter seek them owt and provide for Them god be mersifle to me a grate siner son clarence."

In the same rude handwriting, a line or two below, were these words, added presumably by the sailor to whom the above message had been dictated.

"DEAR SIR,—Yore son would Insist addressing of the envelop of This leter hiself. But was too Much efort he dide jest afterword a good ship mate, the captin is comin Forard to see the remanes, i must close, resp'y, J. KELLEY."

In a silence much more impressive than any words could have been, and without the movement of a line or muscle of his pale, set face to tell of the inward conflict, Mr. Granville folded the letter, and with a steady hand placed it in his pocket. And then all at once his iron nerve gave way.

Laying his face upon his folded arms, on the table

before him, Con heard him muttering in heart-broken accents the words which had concluded his dead son's letter: "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

But Mr. Granville's burst of grief, though almost terrible in its intensity, immediately gave way to other considerations. He would spend money like water, feeble as was the possibility after so many years, in endeavoring to find whether his dead son's wife and child had lived, first of all. And then he thought of his son's murderer within his reach—a man of many crimes.

"Con," he said, "some time, perhaps, you will know what a great service you have done me tonight. That letter was from my only son, and has been kept back all these years by the villain who was the cause of his death. I will return the pocketbook to —Captain Bluster, and at the same time see that he is forced to give up Mrs. Stanhope's cross, the infamous scoundrel—the—the——"

But Mr. Granville's passion was too great to allow him to finish.

"Look here, sir," said Con, respectfully, "I wouldn't go to see Cap'n Bluster tonight, if I was you—you're kind of excited just now, and may be you'd say or do what you'd be sorry for when you've cooled off a bit; the dory's alongside, and you'd better let me pull you off to the yacht."

Con's calm counsel prevailed, and after a sharp struggle with himself, Mr. Granville entered the dory, and was conveyed to the Juno.

The following morning, as Captain Bluster was standing by the cellar of the burned Beehive, he saw Mr. Granville walking directly toward him, with his hand thrust into the breast of his coat, as though he were grasping a concealed weapon.

"Here is something that belongs to you, you in-

famous scoundrel," said Mr. Granville, in a voice almost inaudible with anger, as he threw Captain Bluster's pocketbook at his feet, "and when I tell you that in it I found my son's letter, with a broken seal, addressed to myself, you will understand what I mean when I say that I hardly know what keeps me from laying you dead at my feet!"

With a face of ashy pallor, the captain recovered his pocketbook, and attempted to speak, but a warning gesture from the infuriated man confronting him, kept back the half uttered words.

"Now hear me," continued Mr. Granville, harshly, keeping his hand still upraised; "as true as there is a God of justice above us, if two weeks from this day you have not closed up your business and left Burton forever, then, sir, I'll publish the stories of your infamous villainies—the two men set adrift in mid ocean, my son shot down on the deck of your ship by your own hand, and, lastly, your dealings with young Badger in the matter of Mrs. Stanhope's diamond cross, that must be returned to her by you inside of twenty four hours."

Captain Bluster, awed and cowed by the torrent of righteous indignation poured forth by the speaker, slunk away without a word.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CAPTAIN'S SAFE.

Noticeable among the promenaders in the vicinity of Con Badger's floating ice cream saloon that afternoon was no less a person than Buck Rider.

"I wonder what kind of mischief he's studyin' up," uneasily thought Con, as he set a couple of chairs in position for Mrs. Stanhope and her stepson.

But Con had something else to do beside watching the movements of Buck Rider, for just then quite a little company of ladies and gentlemen came trooping up the gangway plank, among whom, very much to his surprise, and by no means to his pleasure, was Captain Prescott Bluster.

He took the only unoccupied chair close to the outside rail and very near to the table at which Augustus Stanhope and his stepmother were sitting.

Meanwhile Buck Rider, who was meditating a scheme which if successful would enable him to leave the limited sphere of Burton for a wider field of roguery, was watching for an opportunity to get a nearer view of Captain Lewis's new boat, which was moored on the outside of the schooner.

"They say she's stancher an' better ev'ry way for outside work than the Wild Rover even," muttered Buck, in the carrying out of whose projected scheme a good sea going boat was an important adjunct.

Seizing a moment when his movements were unobserved, Rider dropped into a light skiff, fastened

to the wharf near the schooner's stern, and having unloosed it, drew the skiff round to the Dolly's bows, where he had a good opportunity to look the new boat over from stem to stern.

"She'll do," said Rider to himself, approvingly, "an now—"

His meditations were cut short by a voice directly above him—no other than that of Captain Bluster, on the Dolly's deck, near the rail, who was speaking to Mrs. Stanhope.

"I have took the liberty, madam," he heard the captain say, "to address you in this seemin' informal manner to inquire if that offer, made a spell ago, of two thousan' dollars reward an' no questions asked for the return of a cert'in dimin cross, still holds good?"

Buck Rider, as may be imagined, pricked up his ears.

"It does, sir," was the somewhat frigid reply of the lady.

"Since knowin' of your loss, madam" said Captain Bluster, clearing his throat and lowering his voice a little, "I have had—a—cer.in suppositions of my own regardin' the matter, and unbeknown to anybody, have been followin' up a certin clew like a reglar detective, till, after expandin' a considerable sum of money—to say nothin' of a incredulous amount of time—I, madam," and here the captain patted his shirt front gently, "have succeeded in recoverin' your lost vallyble, w'ich is at this moment at my room in the Burton Hotel, in the little drawer of my locked up safe, the key to which is reposin' snugly in my pocket."

"I can scarcely credit your story, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Stanhope, in breathless bewilderment, yet with a faintly dawning hope that it might be true.

"*I* don't believe a word of it," added Agustus, with

charming frankness, "for a man who would set a building on fire— "

"Augustus!" interrupted his stepmother, "for shame!"

"Without condescendin' to notice the sland'rous talk of a beardless boy," said Captain Bluster, rising rather hastily to his feet, "I will say that I will prove the truth of my—my asservations by callin' at your boardin' place tomorrer about 3 P. M., with the dimin cross in all it's pristin' splendor in my persession, to be relinkished on the payment of the two thousan' dollars to me in hand. Good day, madam."

Captain Bluster returned to the Burton Hotel, passing Buck Rider, who was sauntering slowly along with his eyes bent on the ground, and an entirely new train of thought occupying his mind. For the grand stroke of business which young Mr. Rider had projected was rendered far more important by the conversation which he had overheard.

About a year previous, Mr. Merrill, the proprietor of the hotel, regarding his small, old fashioned iron office safe as practically worthless by reason of its age and the simplicity of the lock, which opened with a common brass key, had bought a larger one of improved make. At Captain Bluster's suggestion the old one was moved into his own room, to be used as a receptacle for his numerous papers and stock of ready cash.

Buck Rider had volunteered to help carry the safe up stairs, listening with considerable interest to the laughing comments on the ease with which the clumsy lock could be picked.

How Captain Bluster had come into possession of the diamond cross was a mystery to Buck, but it was enough to know that it was in the safe, and the safe key in Captain Bluster's pocket.

A little after nine o'clock, Rider left the house

where he had a room, and with his hat pulled well down over his forehead, made his way along the more unfrequented side of the street in the direction of the brilliantly lighted Burton Hotel. He walked briskly along, until, reaching a position near the end of the house, he stood in the shadow of a clump of lilac bushes and reconnoitered.

The doors and windows were all open to admit the cooling breeze, while the piazza was occupied by the usual groop of smokers and talkers. Among them Rider, very much to his satisfaction, recognized the loud voice of Captain Bluster, who was announcing, for the benefit of all concerned, his determination of closing up his business in Burton, and taking up what he termed "a residin' permanency in the metroperlis," owing to the growing demands of his shipping interests, which now required a greater share of his personal attention.

Keeping closely in the shadow, Rider reached the angle formed by the junction of the main body of the house with the L. Here a rude shed, for the temporary protection of carts or market wagons, had been erected. Rider found it easy to clamber to the roof and from thence to ascend the gradual slope of the L, till, reaching the top, he placed his hands against the end of the house itself, and stood upright, listening for a moment at the open window of Captain Bluster's room.

All was silent, and without hesitation Rider scrambled noiselessly into the chamber. The safe was set against the wall on the same side with the window, and directly opposite the foot of the bed. Dropping on his knees before it, the burglar inserted first one and then another of his skeleton keys, turning them severally in different directions, and with different degrees of force, but in vain.

"I s'pose I haven't got the reg'lar p'fessional

touch," muttered Rider, as he paused a moment to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, "but all the same—"

The sudden sharp rattle of a key in the lock of the room door, and following snap of the bolt flying back to place, gave a new and unexpected turn to his reflections, and for an instant almost paralyzed him with fear. There was no time to reach the window, and as the door knob turned in the hand of Captain Bluster, Rider squeezed himself in under the foot of the low cottage bedstead.

"Mr. Green is good enough to offer to take a turn or two through the upper hall tonight, captain," said the voice of Roy Cole from the corridor. "There was a gold bracelet taken from Mrs. Murray's room at the Annex last night, and I'm going to watch round there. I'm bound to find out who does all this thieving, sooner or later."

"Well," remarked the captain, "it don't worry *me* none, for I always sleep with one eye open an' a loaded revolver under my piller—woe be to the one that tries to get into *my* room after dark!"

This was very pleasant for Rider, who lay coiled up in his narrow, stifling quarters, bathed in perspiration, and in an agony of apprehension lest the dust which was intruding itself into his nostrils should cause him to sneeze.

Having lighted the lamp and thrown off his coat, the captain unlocked the safe (from which Rider had had presence of mind enough to withdraw his key), and bringing out two account books, some papers, and a couple of packages of bills, he sat down at the table, where he was soon absorbed in balancing his cash account.

Hour after hour, each of which seemed to be at least a day in length to Rider, dragged slowly by, and the mantel clock had announced the hour of

eleven, before the captain, with a prodigious yawn, rose from the table and replaced his money, books and papers in the safe. He locked it, placed the key in his trousers pocket, and having leisurely undressed, hung the trousers themselves over the footboard.

Finally the captain rolled heavily into bed. As after a while his long, regular respiration reached Rider's ear, he began working himself inch by inch downward till he succeeded in inserting his hand in the pocket of Captain Bluster's unmentionables and gaining possession of the coveted key.

As Captain Bluster had intimated, he was a light sleeper. Some slight noise in the room awoke him, and with the remembrance of his conversation with Roy Cole in mind, he sat bolt upright in bed, and grasping his revolver, faltered:

"Who—who's there?"

No answer was returned, but a rustling noise in the direction of the foot of his bed sent a cold chill through his entire system. Suddenly an indistinct form appeared outlined in the open window against the dim half light, and leveling the cocked pistol, Captain Bluster's pressed the trigger.

A partly suppressed cry followed the sharp report of the weapon, followed in turn by the sound of a body falling upon and slipping down the roof of the L to the shed and thence to the ground. The captain sprang out of bed, unlocked his door, pulled on his trousers, and shouted an alarm in less time than I have taken in describing it.

"I've shot the burglar!" he roared to two or three half dressed guests who had rushed from their rooms; "he's a layin' on the ground close to the carriage shed," and Captain Bluster rushed down the hall followed by an excited throng.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAPTAIN BLUSTER'S VICTIM.

Scarcely had the echo of the footfalls descending the hall stairway ceased, when, for a second time, but with far more celerity, Mr. Buck Rider withdrew himself from beneath the foot of Captain Bluster's bed.

"Somebody's got shot, but long's it ain't me, I don't care," he muttered. Unlocking the safe with its proper key, he pulled open the small corner drawer, seized two tolerably thick packages of bank notes and a pasteboard box, from which he removed the cover just long enough to catch the gleam of the diamond cross. Then he thrust the whole into an inside pocket.

Quickly relocking the safe, Rider stepped to the window and peered cautiously into the yard, where half a dozen excited persons had already assembled.

"Dead as a door nail!" he heard one of them say, with an unfeeling laugh. "Let's take him round to the front piazza where there's more light," and in another moment the back yard was deserted.

Rider lost no time in descending the roof to the ground, and, aided by the thick darkness, he passed rapidly along the street in the direction of the wharf, exulting in the ease with which his task had been accomplished thus far.

Arrived at the wharf, Rider got into a skiff that he

had used before, and worked it softly round to the outside of the hull of Con's "floating refreshment depot." He noticed with some uneasiness that a bright light was shining through the cabin window, though everything was perfectly quiet within. Captain Lewis's new boat, the Bess, lay outside the Wild Rover, and taking a file from his pocket, Rider went to work at the small mooring chains.

Ten minutes later the Wild Rover, from the bottom of which Rider had pulled the plug, was drifting slowly and heavily across the harbor, while the Bess, with her sail hoisted and double reefed, lay at the end of the rude stone pier.

Retracing his steps, Rider then coolly cut the lines which held the Dolly to the wharf. Bearing his weight against the side, he watched the dark hull, which, slowly impelled by the wind and outflowing tide, was quickly swallowed up in the darkness.

"I've owed you that a good time, Con Badger," was Rider's triumphant thought as he turned away, "an' I think now we re pretty nigh square; for jedgin' by the set of the tide, it'll take less'n an hour for the ol' schooner to drift fair and square onto the reef that runs out from Burton P'int, 'specially if the wind keeps breezin' this way. Once in among the breakers, Con's ice cream s'loon ain't goin' to stand no great show, though like enough he'll get out of it with a scare an' a duckin'—crickey, what litenin'!"

For as he turned from the wharf, the dark heavens were illumined by a glare of almost noonday splendor. To Rider's great discomposure, among the objects thrown forward in startling distinctness by the flash, was the form of a man standing within a few steps of himself, who uttered a low exclamation as the lihgtning revealed Rider to his own gaze.

"I was looking for you, my friend," said the

stranger, whose dark, smooth shaven face Buck Rider recognized as that of the ubiquitous Green ; and before he fairly recovered from the blinding flash the detective's grasp was upon his collar.

"Well now, look here," exclaimed Rider, calling up all his coolness, "'spose you let go my collar 'n' kind of explain things. Bein' a detective, as folks say you be, don't give you no right, as I know of, to stop folks in this shape. What do you want, any way?"

Rider's seeming coolness staggered even astute Mr. Green, who, if the truth must be known, was only trying a ruse, or what he himself termed a "bluff," hoping to draw out some conscious or perhaps unconscious admission of guilt. He had not a shadow of proof that Buck Rider had robbed Captain Bluster's safe—the fact that it had been robbed having been discovered by himself scarcely ten minutes before.

For while Captain Bluster was detained below by the guests to whom he had repeated the story of his midnight exploit, Mr. Green had slipped quietly up to the captain's room, and, having lighted the lamp, had proceeded to investigate matters. Curiously enough, Mr. Green unlocked Captain Bluster's safe with a key which was an excellent imitation of the real one then reposing in Buck Rider's pocket ; but one glance showed him that he was too late.

The loose soil that had fallen from Rider's shoe, the imprint of a form in the thick dust under the bed, the open window and sloping roof told the story. The detective had long before quietly acquainted himself with certain of Rider's previous transactions, and, knowing that there were no suspicious strangers in town, he made a pretty accurate guess as to Rider's agency in the matter. So, without speaking to any one, he had slipped out of

a side door and hurried down to the pier, where he met and confronted the person he was in search of in the manner already described.

Part of all this was rapidly passing through Mr. Green's mind as he stood half hesitating for a brief second with his hand still clutching the collar of Rider's coat.

The latter, emboldened by his captor's brief indecision, attempted to wrench himself free.

"I'll chance it—hit or miss," was Green's quick thought, and very much to Rider's surprise, Green closed with him and threw him heavily to the ground with such force as to partially stun him.

Before Rider could fairly recover his dazed senses, Green, with a subdued exclamation of triumph, drew from his victim's inside pocket the roll of bills, which were loosely wrapped about the box, and sprang to his feet.

Another flash of lightning—this time followed by a peal of threatening thunder—revealed a new and peculiar phase of the situation in the shape of half a dozen men hurrying toward him along the plank sidewalk, headed by Captain Bluster bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves.

In spite of his secret knowledge of Captain Bluster's private matters, Mr. Green had never dreamed of his having possession of the diamond cross. His only aim was the money itself, which he had hastily wadded about the little box, thinking that perhaps the latter contained some ornament of small value.

These thoughts passed through his mind almost as quickly as the lightning flash which had shown him not only the approaching party, but the means of escape in the shape of the boat Bess, with her sail already hoisted, tugging at her painter at the end of the pier a stone's throw distant.

Green made a quick decision. He could manage a

boat admirably, and in another minute, guided by the now incessant flashes of lightning, made his way rapidly toward the Bess, while Rider stood stupefied by his loss.

"There he is—there's one of 'em!" shouted a couple of the foremost pursuers, among whom were Hugh Penny and Mr. Morris, and in another moment Rider was surrounded.

"I ain't the robber—it's that Green, he's goin' for the boat!" shouted Rider, looking wildly around. "I tried to stop him as he was runnin' past, but he downed me an' nigh broke my arm——"

"By heavens! I believe the fellow's telling the truth!" cried Penny, excitedly, as by another flash they saw Green at the very end of the pier in the bow of the Bess, casting off the fast.

"Well," exclaimed Hugh Penny, "if this don't begin to border on the sensational, I'm a——"

His voice was drowned by a deafening crash which seemed to rend the very heavens! A zig zag bolt of glittering flame, shooting downward, seemed to envelop in its fiery embrace a white speck of sail which the awe stricken spectators knew to be that of the fleeing boat.

"The Lord hev mercy on that poor crittur's soul," exclaimed a solemn voice—that of Captain Lewis. "He must ha' cal'lated to run down under the lee of Plum Islan', an' lay by till the blow slacked up a bit, an' then, by daylight, get off aboard some passin' vessel. But the——"

"Captain Bluster," abruptly said Mr. Morris, turning to that disconsolate individual, who was wringing the water from his shirt sleeves, "how is it you claim to have lost a diamond cross with the money stolen from your safe? *What* diamond cross?"

"It was Mis' Stanhope's," stammered the captain, for once shorn of his aggressive speech and manner;

"I—I—got onto the track of a—a—party that found it an' was concealin' of it, an' I frightened him into givin' of it up, and was to have delivered it into Mis' Stanhope's han's by 'greement"

No one made any comment upon the captain's explanation, and it was plain, even to his obtuse perceptions, that hardly any one was inclined to believe it. Feeling very small and crestfallen, Captain Bluster was about turning away to go to his room for dry clothing when Captain Lewis again spoke.

"I hear that you shot a burglar, cap'n," he said, inquiringly; "has anybody reckernized who it was, or whether it *was* the man that run off with Mr. Morris's bicycle?"

There was an awkward silence for a moment, broken by Captain Bluster himself.

"I ain't seen the——body," he answered, nervously, as a slight pallor crossed his face.

"I dinks," remarked Mr. Kasner, with a half suspicious look at the hesitating captain, "dot Cap'n Bluster shall view the body mit der rest of us as witnesses;" and as a general murmur of acquiescence followed, Captain Bluster did not dare to refuse.

Lanterns were procured, and all present repaired to a large open woodshed, on the other side of the house, where covered with a rubber blanket lay all that was mortal of the hotel thief.

One of the hostlers, with an affectation of solemnity, removed the covering, and exposed the lifeless remains of—

Mr. Sims!

Sims was the mysterious thief, who night after night had entered the open windows from the outside. He had purloined whatever had attracted his cupidity—a small stock of trinkets and jewelry being afterward found, hidden under the back portico, by Captain Lewis.

The captain alone failed to see anything like a joke in the affair.

"If half the stories is true I've heerd tell of you," he said, sharply, to Captain Bluster, who hardly knew what to do or say at this unexpected revelation, "this ain't the first shootin' you've done, though gen'lly its b'en somethin' in the human line, that couldn't defend hisself no better'n my poor Mr. Sims."

And without waiting to hear Captain Bluster's wrathful response, Captain Lewis sorrowfully took up the body of the unfortunate Sims, and bearing it homeward in his arms, buried it under the biggest grapevine.

Now, on the previous evening, being detained till quite late in consultation with his master builder, who was boarding at Miss Cynthia's, Mr. Granville had made his way down to the wharf, with the intention of hailing the Juno, that they might send a boat for him.

The cheerful light shining through the Dolly's small cabin windows attracted his attention, and, moved by a sudden impulse, Mr. Granville clambered on board, making a sort of excuse to himself that he must tell Con that the diamond cross would be returned to Mrs. Stanhope by Captain Bluster on the following day.

After briefly announcing to Con that his interview with Captain Bluster had brought about the desired results, Mr. Granville relapsed into a thoughtful silence. He had fully decided to leave his nephew in charge of his business matters for a few days, and take his own departure for New York, on the feeble chance of tracing his dead son's wife and child.

"That's the little Shakespeare book I was telling you of the other evening, when we found the pocket-

book, sir," said Con, breaking the silence, as he pushed a small, but choicely bound volume across the table. Mr. Granville took it up with languid interest, and turned to the fly leaf, where he noticed some writing.

His face took on such a ghastly color that Con was quite alarmed.

The inscription which had arrested Mr. Granville's attention, and sent the blood pulsing through his veins like an electric current, read thus :

"A birthday gift to my beloved wife Doris Wharncliffe, from her loving husband Clarence, tragedian at the 'Thespian,' July 21, 186—. To be left to our son Constant as a memento of his father and mother, with the hope that he will appreciate the writings of the great Shakespeare as we have done."

It was a tremendous and almost overwhelming discovery to find his own grandson sitting, so unconscious of it all, face to face with himself, and Mr. Granville's nerves were hardly equal to the strain. With his fingers tenderly lingering upon the written page, he bowed his head on the table before him, and for the first time in years his eyes were suffused with tears of mingled sorrow and joy, while from his heart went heavenward the unspoken prayer :

"God, I thank thee for thy wonderful mercies."

"So, according to the writing here, you are Constant Wharncliffe, and not Con Badger?" said Mr. Granville, lifting his head and speaking in curiously constrained tones as he bent his eyes on Con's face, where his awakened interest began to trace a resemblance—very slight, to be sure—to his son Clarence.

"So granny used to say, sir," was the quiet answer. "But I've been called Con Badger so long, that the other name don't seem natural."

"'Granny,' as you call her, was only partly right, Con," returned Mr. Granville, speaking very gently.

"Your father took the name of Wharncliffe instead of his own when *his* father, who was angry with him, disowned him, and he went on the stage, and afterward married your mother under the same name."

Con looked very much puzzled, though the announcement did not disturb him in the least. His father and mother were dead, and a name one way or the other did not matter very much, though he wondered vaguely how Mr. Granville should know all this. Nothing of the kind was written in the little book that he had ever seen.

"I wonder what my own father's name *was?*" he said, inquiringly.

"The same as mine—Granville; for he was my own son; and you, Con, are my grandson," replied Mr. Granville, laying his hand tenderly on the shoulder of his astonished listener.

Con's faith in Mr. Granville's word was unbounded. He did not take it all in at once. In fact, he did not understand it very well; but Mr. Granville had declared himself to be his own grandfather, and of course it must be so. The importance in a pecuniary point of view of being the wealthy Mr. Granville's grandson did not then in the least occur to him.

"I'm *awful* glad I belong to somebody, and I don't know any one in the world I'd rather have for a relation than you, sir," said Con, with simple earnestness.

Hour after hour passed in earnest conversation between the two so singularly united, and it was not until the thunder tempest had really begun in earnest and the rain came dashing down the open companionway, that either of them bethought themselves of the hour.

"You'll have to turn into one of my bunks tonight —grandfather," observed Con, dwelling with a sort of pathetic wistfulness on the last word, as he rose

and pulled over the companionway slide, "for it's blowin' tremendously outside, to say nothing of the rain and thunder."

"It must be terribly rough in the harbor, if the Dolly, lying alongside the wharf, can pitch and toss so," Mr. Granville responded, raising his voice slightly; for the roar of thunder and beating of the rain on the cabin roof was almost deafening.

If Mr. Granville or Con had known that, as a few moments later they sought their respective berths, the Dolly, instead of being safely moored to the wharf, was steadily drifting out toward a most dangerous reef, they would hardly have fallen asleep, lulled by the voice of the storm that was raging about them. It was the terrible thunder peal, whose accompanying flash had cut short the career of the escaping Green, that started them both from a brief slumber of perhaps half an hour's duration.

'That must have struck close by!" exclaimed Con, springing from his berth and huddling on his clothes in nervous haste.

"I hope the Juno's spars are safe," said Mr. Granville, apprehensively, slipping on his vest and shoes. He pushed back the companion slide, and peered out into the blinding darkness.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, as a broad beam of light streamed across the deck from the lamp in the tower of the light house on the end of Burton Point. "Con, we're adrift and driving down on the rocks off the point as fast as the wind and tide will take us!"

Con was perfectly stupefied for the moment. There was no possible escape for the vessel. There was neither rudder to guide, anchor to stop the Dolly's headway, nor boat in which to leave her.

"We are powerless to help ourselves," groaned Mr. Granville, throwing his arm about his newly

discovered grandson's neck, "and we can only leave the result with God!"

Con drew nearer to his grandfather's side, and with what calmnesss they could command the two awaited the final ending. Hither and thither—now sideways, now stern first, the little vessel was tossed like the veriest straw by the relentless waves, while the roar of the breakers, now close at hand, was something terrible.

A great roller sent the vessel's hull to its highest crest, where it hung for a brief second suspended, and then with resistless force it was swept downward in among the jagged rocks encircled by a maelstrom of seething foam.

Amid the crashing and rending of timbers the two clung to the cabin roof, which was flung between two large bowlders, and there held immovable while sea after sea swept furiously over it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RESCUE.

With the first gleam of the gray dawn all Burton was astir. The absence of the Dolly from her accustomed place was quickly discovered, while the severed strands of the lines told the rest.

And when it became known in some way that Mr. Granville was on board the missing vessel as well as Con Badger, excitement reached its height. The wharf and adjoining beach were crowded with eager spectators.

The force of the blow had sensibly abated with the coming dawn, but the deafening thunder of the breakers on Burton Point and the adjoining reef told of the terrible sea still running.

Already a seine boat, belonging to one of the schooners at anchor in the harbor, had been manned by eight hardy fishermen, impatiently waiting for enough daylight to see across the harbor. On the other side lay the Wild Rover, which, having drifted athwart the bow of an anchored schooner, had been secured, bailed out and had the plug replaced in the bottom boards. She was tossing impatiently, chafing at her painter as though anxious to be off in search of the missing ones, while Hugh Penny and Morris in the stern fretted at the enforced delay.

All doubts as to the real character of the mock detective had been dispelled by the examination of his trunk at the hotel. On forcing the lock his en-

tire disguise, while posing as the tramp and afterward the bicycling highwayman, was discovered, as well as various articles of value taken from his victims, including Mrs. Stanhope's watch and chain, and the duplicate key to Captain Bluster's safe.

"There's something about that Rider's complicity in the matter that I can't understand," said Hugh Penny, thoughtfully. "For there was the Bess lying with her sail reefed and hoisted, all prepared for a start. Putting one thing and another together one might think that the two were in collusion——"

A shout from a weather beaten man who stood on a lumber pile with a glass at his eye, checked Morris's further utterance.

"I see part of the old hull, an' the two of 'em is hangin' to it just to the south'ard of Burton P'int," he called, hoarsely, as the murk and mist covering the face of the harbor began to lift.

"Now, boys!" and in another moment the sharp, double ended, wide beamed seine boat, propelled by eight pairs of strong arms, with Captain Lewis "stripped to the buff" wielding the steering oar, shot away from the wharf. She was followed by the Wild Rover, whose bows and lee rail were hid in a smother of foam as she felt the full force of the wind. Hugh was steering, while Morris tended the sheet.

"If this had only been the Bess," shouted Hugh in Morris's ear, "we should make decent weather of it, but this shallow skimming dish is under water oftener than on top;" which was literally true.

"The Bess, I'm afraid, lies somewhere on bottom, and your diamond cross with it, Hugh," returned Morris, leaning to windward as far as possible, as the boat careened to her bearings and sent up drenching showers of spray.

Hugh, who had his eyes steadily fixed on the dis-

tant reef toward which the seine boat was speeding, compressed his lips and frowned slightly, without replying.

"We can't get Mr. Granville and Con off the wreck in such a sea, and with a boat like this," he said, presently; "but I couldn't sit idly ashore while two lives were in danger, and perhaps——"

"By Jove!" excitedly interrupted Morris, half rising to his feet, "there's the Bess, keel up, caught in a fisherman's set net right ahead—steady as you go, Hugh; steady, man!"

With a tremendous slatting of the reefed sail, the Wild Rover shot up into the wind alongside the capsized boat, whose mast had become entangled with the buoy rope of the net; and springing forward with a boat hook, Morris caught hold of the keel, and pulled the Wild Rover still nearer.

Without speaking, Morris pointed downward. Entangled in the coils of the main sheet, about a foot beneath the surface, was the body of Green, whose face appeared ghastly and livid through the waves which swayed the lifeless form to and fro.

"It must be taken on board," said Hugh, who, like most seafarers, was familiarized with the sight of death in its varied forms; and, with the assistance of Morris, the unpleasant duty was soon accomplished.

"Killed instantly," was the latter's awed remark, as he indicated the livid mark of the fatal bolt across the dead face.

Hugh made no reply, for his eye had caught the sparkle of something between the stiffened fingers. Gently unclosing them, he took from their lifeless grasp, and held up before his companion's startled gaze, Mrs. Stanhope's cross.

"The king shall have his own again," cried the latter.

"He probably took the box from his pocket to make sure that the cross was really in it, and had opened it when the flash came," said Morris, secretly delighted beyond measure at his friend's good fortune; "but see, Hugh, the seine boat must have taken our friends off; isn't she in tow of the little steamer heading this way?"

Steadying himself by the mast, Hugh took a long look in the indicated direction.

"Yes," he said, slowly, "and if I'm not greatly mistaken, that's the revenue steamer Kingfisher, that I used to be in. Captain Gleason told me he should be along this way with some can buoys for marking out the ship channel."

Hugh's conjecture proved correct, the boat was headed for the advancing steamer, and twenty minutes later the two were taken on board, while the Wild Rover with her senseless freight was dropped astern.

The crew of the seine boat and her rescued passengers were being cared for in the steward's room. Hugh and Morris, both of whom were drenched and shivering, were shown by bluff old Captain Gleason into the saloon cabin. Both the young men shrank back a little at the sight of a young lady standing at one of the windows, and a portly gentleman lying on the sofa in all the agonies of sickness.

"Oh, don't be alarmed," said the captain, in a low tone, "only an old friend of mine—Stanhope, from New York—and a young lady he's escorting. I happened to fall in with them in Boston, and, finding they were bound for Burton, offered to give 'em a passage; but last night's blow has shaken Mr. Stanhope up pretty badly."

The young lady turned toward them.

"Reba—I mean Miss Cole, is it possible?" stammered Morris, and, forgetful of his appearance, he

stepped forward and took not one, but both, of Miss Reba's hands in his own, probably in the excitement of the moment.

Mr. Hugh Penny made a laughing apology for his own drenched condition, and very briefly explained the situation.

"I am glad to see you here, Mr. Penny," said Reba, "as I have a message for you, and something which I was told to deliver into your hands."

"A message for me," repeated Mr. Penny, looking rather puzzled; why, who——"

"It is quite a mysterious affair, Mr. Penny," said Reba, "and happened this way. Yesterday afternoon, just before the Kingfisher was ready to sail, a foreign looking gentleman came on board, and Captain Gleason introduced him as Mr. Kasmir——"

"Ah—" began Hugh, and exchanging glances with Mr. Morris, he begged the young lady to go on.

"On learning that I was returning to Burton," she continued, "he inquired if I had met Mr. Hugh Penny Cowen, sailing master of a yacht called the Juno; and when I acknowledged to a slight acquaintance with a young gentleman known as Mr. Hugh Penny, he only smiled, and said it was all the same. 'When you see him,' he said, politely, 'give him this small package, and say that Kasmir thus discharges his obligation to his benefactor; he will understand when he opens it.'" And taking a sealed package from a small traveling satchel, Reba handed it to Mr. Penny.

Just then the entrance of Mr. Granville and Con Badger, in dry clothing lent to them by one of the officers, created a diversion, particularly when Mr. Granville, with considerable formality, introduced embarrassed Con as his newly found grandson, Constant Granville, deferring all explanations to a more convenient season.

The Kingfisher was now approaching Burton wharf. Cheer after cheer went up from an excited crowd as rescued and rescuers appeared in sight.

As soon as the steamer was made fast, the body of Mr. Green was taken ashore to await the arrival of the coroner, and when it became known that Mr. Penny had recovered the diamond cross from the dead man's hand, and that Captain Bluster's money would be found in one of his pockets, the excitement was intense.

Reba Cole's return, too, aroused the warmest interest. In company with Mr. Stanhope, and followed by Mr. Morris and Hugh, the young girl passed with a throbbing heart through the throng, and made her way toward the old homestead. Miss Cynthia had already heard of her coming, and was standing at the garden gate, shading her eyes with her hand as she looked impatiently down the street.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

"AUNTY, dear," said Reba, in a rather tremulous voice, as she held Miss Cynthia's careworn face, wet with tears of joy, against her own fair cheek, "like the mouse in the fable, I have seen enough of the world to call it hollow. Even in my short experience I have found that money doesn't always bring happiness. It was all very delightful at first," continued the young girl, frankly, "and I enjoyed everything, but soon it began to weary me, and my heart grew homesick. Madam Frissole was kind and good; I had money and dresses and finery in abundance. But I think when she saw me beginning to pine for the old home life, she repented of her impulsive whim; and it did not break her heart when I told her of my longing for my old home by the sea. And now, dear aunty," said Reba, in her old firm tone, "I've come back to you to help carry the burden——"

Here Roy, who had hurried home to greet his sister, could no longer contain himself.

"There won't be much more burden carrying for either of you two women," he burst out impetuously: "for I might as well tell you now, Mr. Granville is going to put *me* in charge of the new hotel he's building, with some one older to 'coach' me a bit. He says that, young as I am, Mr. Merrill thinks I'm

just cut out for the business ; and you, Aunt Cynthia—you and Reba shall have the best suite of rooms in the house."

A tap at the door was followed by the entry of Mr. Granville with Con. Behind them came Mr. Morris and Hugh Penny Cowen, to give him his proper name, the two young men having made some very necessary changes in their toilet in the seclusion of Mr. Morris's apartment.

Mr. Granville's errand was to engage rooms for himself and Con (whom, to Miss Cynthia's amazement, he introduced as "my grandson") during the erection of the hotel. This, of course, necessitated a narration of the whole story of the strange discovery of Con's parentage.

Mr. Granville then declared his intention of unveiling an impostor, and despite Mr. Morris's agonized signals, he informed the assembled company that Mr. Edward Morris not only was his own unworthy nephew, but that instead of being dependent upon school teaching for a living, he had a nice little sum of fifty thousand dollars in his own right.

"Everybody seemed determined to make out that I was very poor when I first came here," said Mr. Morris, "so I allowed them to think so ; besides it showed me who were my real friends."

Just then Jerry, the crow, fluttered up to the window sill with a hoarse croak of greeting, while in the distance appeared the Stanhope phaeton, containing three individuals, driving slowly towards the house. Perhaps it was this that moved Roy Cole, after exchanging a few whispered words with his sister, to remark that as explanations and astonishing discoveries seemed to be the order of the day, he had something to tell. He related his own heedless impulsive act, and the part played by Jerry and the now defunct Sims in the matter.

"And this supplies the missing link," was Mr. Granville's remark.

Miss Cynthia was dumb. For once she had no words at command. With Reba's hand in her own, she sat mutely gazing from one to another till the sudden stoppage of the phaeton directly before the front gate evoked from her lips the remark:

"Well, what now?"

A stout gentleman, with gold rimmed eye glasses, in whom Reba recognized her late fellow traveler, assisted Mrs. Stanhope to alight, while Augustus sat, with an unmoved visage, holding the reins. The lady swept up the narrow walk, leaving her husband staring about him. Hugh Cowen, who was glancing from the open window, smiled quietly as an imperative rap resounded from the brass knocker.

"I think that Mrs. Stanhope's business is with myself, and if you will allow me I will go to the door," he said.

Meanwhile Miss Cynthia had turned to Con and his grandfather, and was plying them with a torrent of eager questionings; Mr. Morris and Miss Reba were talking together apart by the window, Roy having taken his departure. Ushering Mrs. Stanhope into what Miss Cynthia denominated the "best room," Hugh Penny waited for her to speak.

"I learn," said she, "that you have recovered my diamond cross from the body of the man who met his death in the storm of last night."

"I recovered *a* cross—yes, madam," was the quiet reply of Hugh.

"I wish to say," continued the lady, with a bright spot on either cheek, "that although you may think possession gives you the advantage, yet I will *never* consent to give up my claim; and if you still persist in refusing to deliver up the cross to me, I shall tell Mr. Stanhope the whole story from beginning to end."

"Mrs. Stanhope," answered Hugh, "all this talk on your part is unnecessary; here is the cross; I lay no claim to it." And to her astonishment he extended his hand, in the open palm of which lay the glittering ornament. Mrs. Stanhope clutched it with trembling eagerness.

"Why, I thought that you once said——"

"That, some day or other, right would prevail, and I should have my diamonds again; yes, madam, and my prophecy has come true," said Hugh. He drew from an inside pocket. a small box of exquisitely chased silver, removed the cover, and took out a thin square of folded rice paper closely written over. Then he extended the box towards Mrs. Stanhope, who saw, sparkling on a background of black velvet, seven unset brilliants, the exact counterpart of those in her hand.

Mrs. Stanhope caught her breath, and sank into the nearest chair.

"What —does it mean?" she faintly asked.

For answer, Hugh slowly unfolded the square of rice paper, and read in clear, distinct tones, as follows:

To Hugh Penny Cowen:

"Your diamonds have come to you at last; seven is always the favorite number of fortune. You knew that I gave them to your father, to be kept for yourself. I have great surprise when, years after, they are sent to me by your father's second wife to be set in a gold cross for her, as I recognize them at once. I learn that you have been lost at sea—later I know different. This year the cross is brought to me by a Captain Prescott, as he calls himself to me, who requires of me to replace the diamonds by the most skillful imitation. I do so, and buy of him your diamonds for comparatively small money, which is nothing to my riches. He takes away the cross, for some dishonest purpose, as I suspect, but it is not my business to know. I now return you your own; may you prosper.

Kasmir.

Mrs. Stanhope had never before so nearly fainted as when Hugh folded up the paper and put the box back in his pocket. She had to confess herself beaten

at her own game. She was at the mercy of her stepson, who could so readily avenge himself for her past treatment of him by telling the whole story, and revealing his own relationship to her, which had been so carefully concealed from Mr. Stanhope and Augustus all these years.

"And *these*," gasped Mrs. Stanhope, as she glanced at the cross in her hand, "these are paste!"

"They are Asiatic crystals whose brilliancy and luster are said to deceive even the most skilled experts," replied Hugh, with a feeling of pity for his stepmother's humiliation, "and unless you yourself make the fact known, neither the world nor your husband will be the wiser. And now," added Hugh in a kindly voice, "let me say that, for myself, I am more than willing to bury the past. In all probability you and I shall never meet again after I leave Burton. Shall we not part in good will, and will not you yourself lay aside past resentment?"

Mrs. Stanhope could hardly speak as she rose to her feet.

"Hugh—forgive me—I wish you well," she half whispered, as he accompanied her to the door. Then with the same firm, elastic step as ever, she passed down the walk and rejoined her husband. They drove away at once; and to this day neither he nor Augustus can understand how it was that a penniless young seafaring man should firmly refuse—as Mrs. Stanhope avers—the proffered reward of two thousand dollars.

"Well," said Miss Cynthia, as Mr. Penny reentered the room, "it 'pears to me as though there was nothin' more left in the way of s'prises."

She stopped suddenly, and glared in speechless indignation as a tall red faced individual, no other than Captain Prescott Bluster, coolly entered the partly opened door without knocking. The captain

seemed slightly disconcerted at the presence of so many persons, especially as Mr. Granville uttered an angry exclamation and was on the point of ejecting him by force, had he not been restrained by his nephew.

Clearing his throat and removing his hat, the captain turned to Hugh Penny and delivered himself as follows :

"I have, sir, with the permission of the coroner, recovered from the—er—body of the individual who robbed my safe las' night, the money he stole, in a pulpous but redeemable condition ; an' now I demand from you the summary restitution of Mrs. Stanhope's dimin cross, as today I have undertook to return the same and receive the reward offered therefor."

"And I demand from you, Captain Bluster," said Mr. Morris, who that morning learned the facts from Hugh Cowen, "that you follow this article of headgear," taking up the captain's hat and tossing it through the open door, "before you are put out by force. This house is not in the habit of receiving a criminal even as a transient caller ; and when I tell you that Mrs. Stanhope knows what transpired between you and Kasmir, I think you will understand my meaning—now go ! "

And with a face of ghastly pallor, Captain Bluster slunk ignominiously out. It was remarked afterward by many that they could have hardly thought it possible for Captain Bluster to have closed up his business in Burton so speedily; for a day or two later he took his departure, and the threatened lawsuit, "Bluster *vs.* the Equity Insurance Co.," never came to trial.

Miss Cynthia took off her spectacles and laid them in her lap. Then in an audible voice she began to separate the different discoveries she had made, telling them off on her fingers one by one.

"Mr. Morris ain't poor—he's rich, that's one. Mr. Granville, he's found a gran'son he never knowed he had, an' is goin' to send him to to finish his eddication—two. Roy's goin' to keep Mr. Granville's hotel—that's three. I've got my blessed Reba back—four. Cap'n Bluster's a swindler—though I always knowed it—five. Mrs. Stanhope's got her dimin cross, only there's somethin' about that bizness I don't understan'—six. Cap'n Lewis is to hev pay for the Dolly—is seven. Buck Rider's cleared out, an' good reddance go with him—eight. Mr. Green's drowned and Sims is dead—nine, and Mr. Penny, who's name's Cowen, is——"

Here Aunt Cynthia glanced inquiringly at the young man, who was looking from the window out over the harbor.

"Well, Miss Cynthia," said Hugh, turning with a bright smile, "I have made arrangements with Mr. Granville for the charter of his yacht; and I am purposing to get up a party for a little trip round the world. I am in hopes that Morris here may be persuaded to make one of the number—unless prior claims"—here he glanced at Miss Reba, perhaps unconsciously—"forbid."

And then leaving Mr. Granville and Con to say good by, Hugh drew Morris out on the piazza—presumably to dwell further on the topic of the proposed yachting trip. And while they were talking earnestly together, the Stanhope phaeton returned from the village and drove slowly by the gate. On the further side sat Mr. Stanhope, plethoric and pompous. In the middle, Augustus, looking stiffly over the top of his high collar, manipulated the whip and reins. And on the side nearest the Cole homestead, half reclined Mrs. Stanhope.

As she turned slightly and bowed in response to the respectful salutations of the two young men, the

rays of sunshine struck the cross which she had fastened in its place at her white throat, and sent out a shower of sparkling scintillations from the brilliant crystals.

Then the cross and its possessor passed out of sight.

"So this world's glory passes away," said Morris, with a smile. "Hugh, I won't decide on taking that trip till I have—a—consulted with—with a friend."

"I see," said Hugh, laughing. And then they both went in.

THE END.

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